

#GAAyouth



#GAAyouth

HAVE YOUR VOICE
HEARD

HEARD

Consultation Day
SUMMARY REPORT



#GAAyouth HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD



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#GAAyouth HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD

The #GAAyouth Consultation Day was a workshop held with young people in the GAA about how they can have their voice heard within the Association. As a young person within the GAA, 'having your voice heard' means that you feel like your opinions are valued and respected, by your teammates, your coaches and your parents in your club, county and nationally.

The consultation is part of a bigger #GAAyouth programme, which is looking at how young people can have a say on decisions that affect them as GAA members. The GAA has formed a partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), who are the national experts in making sure that children and young people are respected and have a say in decisions about the things they do in their daily lives.

The #GAAyouth Consultation Day was held in June 2014 and was conducted by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs with the assistance of the GAA Youth Committee. On the day, the young people focused in on a number of key questions, including:

What does 'HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD' mean to young people in the GAA?

What HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD in their clubs, counties and at national level?

WHAT STOPS YOUNG PEOPLE having their voice heard in their clubs, counties and at national level?

What are the KEY ISSUES IN THE GAA that young people want to have a say on?

How would young people like to have their voice heard going forward - WHAT NEW AND IMPROVED IDEAS DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE to make sure their voices are heard?

WHO TOOK PART?

A total of 101 GAA Youth Ambassadors between the ages of 15 and 19 participated in the #GAAyouth Consultation Day in Croke Park. 29 counties were represented by 64 boys and 37 girls in total. The GAA Youth Ambassadors were recruited through the County Boards as well as via the GAA website and GAA twitter.

WHAT DOES 'HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD' MEAN TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE GAA?

On the day, the Youth Ambassadors had loads of ideas about what 'having your voice heard' means. The main feedback was that 'having your voice heard' is about adults listening to and respecting young people as individuals. Young people in the GAA said that they feel listened to and respected in a number of circumstances and through a number of activities, including:

- Allowing players to vote for their team captain;
- Giving players time off around exams;
- Asking players for their opinion on playing gear;
- Giving young members increased responsibility within the GAA;
- Including young people on committees;
- Holding a youth forum;
- Sending group texts to young players to keep them informed about training or matches;
- Giving young members equal access to match tickets;
- Inviting young people to AGMs;
- Holding regular team meetings so that players can talk about performance or concerns with their managers;
- Providing young people with equal access to facilities;
- Inviting players to a meeting at the start of the year to discuss training times and schedules;
- Supporting young people to become coaches and/or referees;
- Involving young people in fundraising activity.

WHAT DOES HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD MEAN?

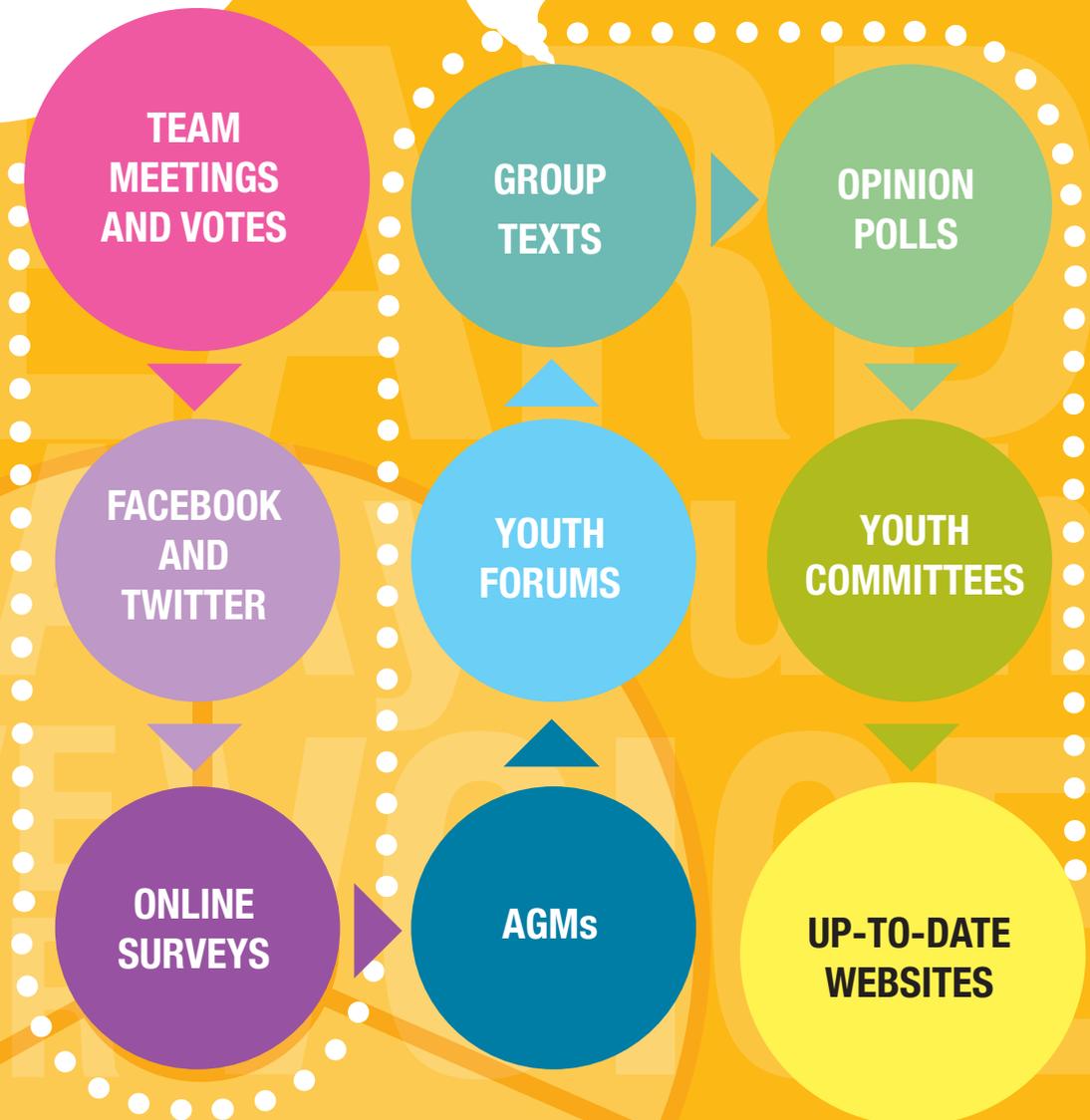
WE THINK WE SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PLAYER WELFARE - ISSUES LIKE MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

IT WOULD BE GREAT TO HAVE A YOUTH OFFICER OR YOUTH COMMITTEE WHO WOULD REPRESENT OUR VIEWS

CLUBS SHOULD USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE WITH US

WHAT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD?

Youth Ambassadors felt that there are a number of simple activities that can help them to have their voice heard.



Some of the adults who help young people to have their voices heard include:

- Team Managers
- Senior Players
- Parents
- Guest Speakers
- Youth Officers
- Club Secretaries
- County Secretaries

POOR PLANNING

The young people said that poor planning of match fixtures and training schedules is a real problem at club and county level - *'training is at awkward times and club and county [training] frequently clashes'*.

Young people are not asked for their views and the fact that young people may be dual players or play on multiple teams is not always taken into account - this can lead to a clash between matches or training schedules. As well as this there can be difficulties when matches or training takes place at the same time as exams.

The result of poor planning is that young people feel under pressure - *'managers put too much pressure on players to play one sport'; 'teachers give out about us missing class'; 'coaches sometimes expect players to put football ahead of exams - even training during end of year exams!'; 'for dual county players matches and training can be on at the same time and same day, therefore players are under pressure to choose one over the other and then they look bad and feel bad'; 'Work clashing with games - causes tension'*.

POOR BEHAVIOUR

Poor behaviour by adults - especially coaches - was felt to be a massive barrier that stops young people from having their voice heard.

Some of the poor behaviour mentioned by the young people included:

- Favouritism by coaches towards their own relatives - *'players getting picked because their father or relative is managing the team'*;
- Overtraining of teams - *'not allowing breaks... too much training, managers won't listen when squad asks for a break'*;
- Coaches not being fully qualified - *'not being qualified... coaches sometimes don't know what they are talking about and are teaching us the wrong things especially at younger levels e.g. not teaching the ready position properly'*.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

A lot of Youth Ambassadors felt that there very poor communication with young people in the GAA, some of the young people said that *'our voices are never heard - there's never meetings with us'*, *'nobody listens to us'* and also that *'we are really unaware of opportunities to comment or have an input on any aspect of the GAA'*.

The Youth Ambassadors also felt that there is poor communication between the different groups of adults e.g. between team managers in the club or between adults in the club and adults on the county board, this means that players can often get caught in the middle!

WHAT STOPS YOUNG PEOPLE FROM HAVING THEIR VOICE HEARD?

UNEQUAL TREATMENT

It was felt that a lot of inequality exists in the GAA and that people can often be treated differently from others because of their age, gender, choice of sport, club background and playing level.

The young people said that this can often cause tension between the following:

- youths v adults;
- boys v girls;
- hurling v football;
- small clubs v large clubs;
- club v county.

ON WHAT ISSUES DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD?

As part of the #GAAyouth consultation the Youth Ambassadors were asked to if there are any particular issues about which they *'would like to have their voice heard'* at club, county and national level.

Once they had named the issues, the young people were then able to pick one of the topics and to discuss this in a group. The young people chose to discuss 8 topics, including:

- Coaching
- Committees
- Dual Players
- Fixtures and Training Schedules
- Funding
- Gender Equality
- Health, Nutrition, Injury and Burnout
- Referee Support and Development
- Youth Development

A SUMMARY OF THE FEEDBACK FROM THE GROUPS IS PROVIDED ON PAGES 6 - 8

GENDER EQUALITY

- A lot of the time double-standards apply to boys and girls at club and at county level.
- Women should be encouraged to become more involved in Gaelic games across a number of different roles e.g. committee members, referees, coaches, TV analysts.
- There should be equal treatment for boys and girls in terms of playing gear, transport and access to pitches - *'introduce policies at club level where boys and girls get equal transport opportunities - if boys get free buses so should girls'*.
- More should be done to promote ladies matches at club and county level.

HEALTH, NUTRITION, INJURY & BURNOUT

- There is a need to provide expert information to players, parents and coaches.
- There is a need to limit young people from playing with older age grades, particularly at club level - *'Young players shouldn't be made play with older teams - it will cause burnout'*.
- Croke Park should coordinate match fixtures and training schedules in order to prevent injury and/or burnout - *'each player should have a restriction on how many times they can train in a week based on their age and the type of training being done'*.
- Player welfare needs to be a priority - *'organise club championship and county championship [having] regard to player health and well-being'*.

COMMITTEES

- It is really important that the views and thoughts of young people are communicated to and represented by committees at club, county and national level.
- A better structure needs to be put in place to involve young people in GAA committees e.g. *'youth representation on adult committees'*; *'separate youth committees that can bring views forward to adult committees'*; *'youth representation at GAA Congress'*.
- Social media could be a powerful *'outlet'* for allowing young people to communicate with Committees.

REFEREE SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

- There needs to be better communication between referees and young people especially around the playing rules as this might help stop fouls - *'have a referee visit underage players and teach clubs to create a greater understanding of the rules'*; *'briefings [of players] by referees or referee representatives at the start of the season'*; *'more interaction from referees in matches'*.
- The young people thought it is important to have increased respect for referees including *'penalties for abuse - fines for clubs or counties'*.
- Greater respect for young people by referees is also required.

FIXTURES & TRAINING SCHEDULES

- It is important to have certainty around fixtures and training across all age grades, codes and competition levels of the Association - a *'masterplan'* of fixtures and training is needed.
- Clubs and County Boards should speak with young people before finalising fixtures/training schedules or before making changes to fixtures/training schedules.
- Dual players should be looked after better - matches and training should be planned to have regard for *'facilitating dual players' hectic schedules'*.
- Croke Park and County Boards should coordinate fixtures and training so that there is a good balance between hurling and football as well as between club and county level.
- Training should be planned in advance and players should not train too much in a week - two age groups should train together to avoid burnout.
- Club fixtures need to be a priority - *'give priority to pre-organised club fixtures'* and *'have club league games played before championship starts regardless of the availability of county players'*.

FUNDING

- Young people should be asked about how money should be spent at club and county level. Young people would have good ideas about this - *'players from respective teams should be able to have a say in the funding of the club, all players are part of the club not just the adults'; 'there should be a separate youth committee with young players in the county so that underage players can voice opinions on funding to the county board'*.
- Funding should be spread more fairly between counties and clubs to address current inequalities between clubs and counties in terms of size, development etc. - *'smaller clubs should get more money because bigger clubs have more members to put money back in the club'; 'some of the county money should be given to the smaller clubs within the county with less facilities and equipment'*.
- There should be a more even spend on hurling and football.

DUAL PLAYERS

- There is too much pressure - physical and mental - placed on dual players.
- The young people noted that dual players are not given enough recovery time between matches and training. As well as this dual players can often be pressurised by managers to choose one sport over the other.
- There needs to be better planning and communication in order to facilitate dual players - *'stop clashing fixtures - make both managements aware of upcoming fixtures'; 'have a player meeting with managers of both teams and plan training days'*.
- There should be youth committees at all levels and representation on adult committees so that dual players can express their views.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Young people should be encouraged to become involved in GAA as players and also in other roles such as coaching and refereeing - *'more opportunities to take lead and to demonstrate leadership within their club e.g. coaching and refereeing'; 'more GAA refereeing and coaching courses for youths to promote younger referees and coaching involvement'*.
- All players should get to play regardless of their skill level - *'give all kids games to improve them, not just playing the best players all the time'*.
- Adults need to be careful about keeping young people involved - *'deal with kids getting dropped... as they tend to quit as they think that they're not good enough'*.
- There needs to be equal chances to participate in county squads for players from all clubs - *'more opportunities for less-known clubs to attend county trials'; 'give more people a chance to have county trials'*.
- There should be more games and more types of competitions - *'more féiles - mini-féile, Leinster Féile etc.'*
- Young people should be involved with policy and decision-making at national level through a national youth committee or a model similar to Dáil na nÓg.

COACHING

- Young people should be helped and encouraged to become GAA coaches.
- Coaches should be fully trained and meet a required level of quality - *'not just bringing in a famous ex-county star to manage the team'*.
- There needs to be a different approach when coaching different age groups particularly at younger levels where there needs to be *'less stress on winning for younger players and more focus on team play and skills'*.
- Coaches need to act more responsibly to avoid burnout for teenage players.

The Youth Ambassadors worked in groups to make a number of recommendations on how they would like their voices heard at Club, County and National level. Once each group had made a recommendation for each level it was then put to a general vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

@ CLUB LEVEL

- Make sure fixtures are played before a certain fixed date e.g. league final
- Have an input into planning of fixtures and training
- Nutrition plan should be advised at the start of the year and looked at throughout the year
- Hold events in local clubs to get young players' opinions and input on how to prevent injury, burnout and similar topics
- Keep training regular e.g. Tuesday and Thursday – don't change it once it is set
- Pre-season consultation from referees and referees' representatives
- Set up youth committees and team meetings in clubs along with youth representative on club committee
- Young people given the chance to coach through workshops at club and school level
- Policies to ensure fairness between boys and girls for pitch times, matches etc. This would be better (more ladies on organising committees)
- All women and men's Championship Finals should be played in the main county ground
- A youth committee should be set up with a player from each team from U.12 upwards along with important members of the club committee and their function should be to distribute money equally between youth and seniors
- Players select five players from their club to experience Inter County training.
- Encouragement at Primary School level for minorities to play sports

HOW WOULD YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE TO HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD?

RECOMMENDATIONS

@ COUNTY LEVEL

- Players should keep a diary of what they eat during the week, which could be assessed by the management
- To have a youth representative at county board level
- Better communication between a) club and county; b) club and young people
- Equal funds from County Board for men and women
- We would recommend equality in payment for membership and gear between men and women's codes
- Players who play on county teams should have county matches and trainings prioritised by their club so as to reduce stress, injury and burnout
- Communication between referees and counties to discuss roles regularly
- Social media representatives selected from club youth committees
- Have league games played before championship regardless of availability of county players
- Facilitate club teams when organising county training
- Support for young players dropped from county team
- Accessibility for people in wheelchairs

RECOMMENDATIONS

@ NATIONAL LEVEL

- Greater punishment for racism and discrimination
- Large youth representation at Congress
- Larger penalties for abuse – two way respect to, and from, players
- Have a fairer draw for counties that aren't as strong
- Not to exceed four training sessions a week to avoid burnout
- Recovery plan after training and after injury should be provided to players
- To have national youth panel to look at the promotion of hurling and football on an equal basis
- Survey all youth players on youth structures – findings will decide where funding will go
- Coaching should be promoted and emphasised as an online resource
- Female analysts at men games as well as women's games
- A youth officer from each province to attend all national committee meetings to ensure young players' voices are heard in relation to injury, burnout and nutrition
- That everyone is under the same umbrella with equal representation of ladies and other sports on the national committee

OUTCOME OF THE VOTE

@ CLUB LEVEL

ALL WOMEN AND MEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS SHOULD BE PLAYED IN THE MAIN COUNTY GROUND

OUTCOME OF THE VOTE

@ COUNTY LEVEL

TO HAVE A YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE AT COUNTY BOARD LEVEL

OUTCOME OF THE VOTE

@ NATIONAL LEVEL

THAT EVERYONE IS UNDER THE SAME UMBRELLA WITH EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF LADIES AND OTHER SPORTS ON THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

At the end of the #GAAyouth Consultation Day the young people were asked 'what was the best thing about the day', some of the responses included:

"Feeling like your opinion was listened to"

"Talking about all the different topics and hearing everyone else's view"

"Coming together and sharing our passion for the GAA and sharing opinions on certain topics"

"Being able to express my views on issues that may have an impact in the future"

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING THEIR VOICE HEARD:

WHAT WAS THE
BEST THING
ABOUT THE DAY...

"The food"

"My points got across"

"Involvement and discussions"

"Being in Croke Park"

"Meeting new people from different counties"

"That finally youths voices can be heard at club, county and national level: all recommendations are considered and none were brushed off"

"Getting heard by the GAA"

"I liked how interactive it was"

"It was up-beat and not boring"

"The idea of engaging with young people from across the country or GAA events. The idea of the GAA. We have learned change is a barrier of resistance. It's a fantastic initiative"

"Meeting people with opinions on the problems in GAA. Helped feel like change will happen"

"Having the opportunity to discuss issues relating to youth and being taken so seriously. Also having an opportunity to chat with those from other countries"

"Getting a say, even though we are young. Learning that we can have a say"

"Hearing the views of people from other countries about topics and problems that affect my own country"

NEXT STEPS...

Based upon the feedback provided by the Youth Ambassadors the GAA's National Youth Committee will take the following steps in order to help young people to have their voices heard in the Association:

A letter will be sent to every County Board telling them about the #GAAyouth Consultation Day and outlining the young people's recommendation that "All women and men's Championship Finals should be played in the main county ground". As part of the letter we will ask every County Board to consider delivering on this recommendation where possible.

A Youth Committee will be piloted in a selected number of counties in 2015 and it is hoped that by 2018 every county will have a Youth Committee and a 'youth representative' on every County Board.

A request will be made that the next National Youth Committee is made up of equal numbers of men and women with representatives from the LGFA and the Camogie Association on the Committee.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) will continue to work with and support the GAA to set up structures to give children and young people a voice in decision-making in the organisation.

In addition to this the GAA Youth Committee will invite all the Youth Ambassadors to another workshop day in order to discuss other actions that can be taken in 2015 to help young people to have a voice in the GAA at all levels.



#GAAyouth

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any ideas about how young people can have a voice in the GAA or to get involved in the #GAAyouth programme we would love to hear from you!

Please check out our page

WWW.GAA.IE/YOUTH-ZONE

for further information and for contact details.