



GAISCE
THE PRESIDENT'S
AWARD

30TH ANNIVERSARY AND
RESEARCH LAUNCH EVENT

22nd April, 2015

European House, Dawson Street, D2



"It made you feel you
had **self-worth**"

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Does **Gaisce - The President's Award** act as catalyst in the enhancement of the psychological attributes of: hope, self-efficacy, self-esteem, happiness, and psychological well-being in its participants?

Foreword

Since the foundation of Gaisce in 1985, it has grown from strength to strength, expanding year on year, contributing to the personal development of hundreds of thousands of young people in that period. Whilst the work of the organisation has always been highly valued, this research which involved six hundred and forty seven participants now provides clear and convincing evidence of just how pivotal a part Gaisce plays in the development of so many of our young people who are Ireland's greatest asset.

I congratulate the organisation on their outstanding achievements to date and look forward to working with them in the future as they continue to increase their impact and perform a key role in securing better outcomes and brighter futures for our young people.

Yours Sincerely,

Minister James Reilly



*"It's a lifetime **achievement**: to **challenge** yourself, to see how far you could **push yourself**, ... and discover where your limits are."*

Introduction

by John Concannon

In 2010, the Gaisce Council undertook to explore the impact of participation in Gaisce on young people through supporting independent doctoral research. Now complete, and being published as part of our 30th anniversary celebrations, the findings of that research are significant in highlighting the very positive impact that participation in Gaisce has on young people with respect to a variety of competencies and psychological attributes.

In the five years since this journey began, significant and important developments have taken place, not least the publication in 2014 of the first overarching national policy framework for children and young people, Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. Taking an all-government approach, Better Outcome, Brighter Futures identifies five national outcome areas for children and young people in Ireland: being active and healthy, physically and mentally; achieving in all areas of learning and development; being safe and protected from harm; economic security and opportunity; and being connected, respected and contributing to society and community. Shortly, a National Youth Strategy for young people aged 10-25 will be finalised and will identify specific strategic objectives with respect to the five national outcomes.

Where does Gaisce fit in? It is precisely in the context of the national policy framework and planned outcomes that the research findings come to life. Gaisce is a personal development programme. This research confirms it a very effective one: as a result of their participation, young people's sense of themselves and their abilities improved; they had fun and were happier; and they felt more resilient with respect to facing life's challenges. Gaisce is also an effective non-formal educational 'tool'. The more than 1,500 active President Award Leaders who deliver Gaisce within and across a variety of organisations that provide services or supports to young people



know this: from youth services, cafés and clubs to secondary schools; from disability organisations to community development projects; from sporting, uniformed and community and voluntary organisations to ITs, universities, Foróige and YWI; and so on and so forth.

In our new strategic plan, Gaisce recommits to first principles. Established to provide a non-competitive programme to young people, especially those who could most benefit, the strategic priorities Gaisce has committed to for the period of this plan include ensuring that Gaisce is accessible to all young people in Ireland, and increasing awareness of the value of the programme. Our vision is for an Ireland where young people dream big and fulfil their potential and our mission is to provide the opportunity for them to do so through the Gaisce programme. We can only do that through working with PALs and the organisations they work and / or volunteer in. We hope this research highlights how valuable Gaisce can be for any organisation that seeks to empower young people to achieve their potential.

Huge thanks are due to a number of people for realising this project and I am delighted for the opportunity to thank previous and present Council members, Gaisce staff, Gaisce PALs, the researcher Niamh Clarke McMahon and the team in UCD and, of course, the young people that took part.

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*“It adds to your **self-worth**.
It made you feel like you had
self-worth...(through) finding
there’s **something good**
about you, something you
worked for.”*



Executive Summary

Aims

In 2010, independent research towards a PhD degree in Psychology was undertaken by Niamh Clarke-MacMahon. The aims of the research were to determine: If Gaisce - The President's Award acted as a catalyst in the enhancement of positive psychological attributes of hope, happiness, self-efficacy, self-esteem and psychological well-being in its participants; and to investigate whether Gaisce met the necessary criteria to be termed a 'Positive Youth Development' programme. A positive youth development programme is one that, through building protective factors, has the potential to act as a buffer against psychological distress and assist young people to take control of their lives in a meaningful and pro-active way.



Methodology

The research, which took a positive psychology strengths-based approach, combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods and involved a mixed-gender group of participants (647 in total) at Bronze and Gold level, at two points in time: pre-participation and post-participation. Comparison was also made with a control group of non-participants. Questionnaires assessed participants' pre and post-participation levels of hope, self-efficacy, self-esteem, happiness and psychological well-being. Interviews captured the personal perspectives and feelings of young people regarding their experience of participation in Gaisce.



*"I **believe** in myself - as corny as that sounds! The harder the challenges, the more **determined** I am to finish them and to complete them."*

Findings

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative components of the research confirmed and corroborated each other. They were as follows:

- The quantitative results confirmed clinically significant enhanced levels of hope (pathways) thinking and self-efficacy for both Bronze and Gold participants when compared with a control group.
- The quantitative results also found significantly improved levels of hope (pathways), self-efficacy, self-esteem, happiness and psychological well-being for Bronze participants who had scored in the lowest quartile of the group in pre-testing against their control counterparts. This suggests that those with greater psychological needs benefited most from participation in Gaisce.
- The qualitative results verified that participation in Gaisce enhanced participants' personal strengths and psychological attributes, with the following key themes emerging:
 - Enhanced positive relationships: participants felt they were better able to develop friendships and team relationships with others, and that their communication skills had improved.
 - Increased empathy and altruism: participants felt more compassionate towards others and that their patience and understanding of other people had improved. Also, that they would be more likely to volunteer or help others.
 - Greater mental fortitude: participants felt they were more resilient, had developed a greater sense of commitment and enhanced capacity to challenge themselves, to be self-motivated, to push themselves and to persevere.

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*“Participants felt they were **more resilient** and had developed a greater sense of **commitment.**”*



- Increased positive emotions: participants expressed feelings of enjoyment, fun and happiness.
- Self-efficacy: participants gained a sense of accomplishment and greater confidence and belief in their own ability to set goals and achieve them. Personal growth: participants felt a greater sense of maturity and recognition of the opportunity to learn and change.
- Positive thought: participants felt more positively about themselves and generated greater levels of confidence and an improved sense of self-esteem, self-worth and self-belief.
- Other themes to emerge included: the opportunity to mentor others; an enhancement of pre-existing skills and the development of new skills;
- Improved fitness levels.

Finally, the Gaisce programme, through its structure, operation and outcome goals, was found to successfully meet the inclusion criteria to be classified as a Positive Youth Development programme.

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*“The **achievement** is **huge**.
And it does increase your
self-esteem”.*

ENHANCED LEVELS OF HOPE
SELF-EFFICACY - SELF-ESTEEM
HAPPINESS
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
PERSONAL STRENGTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS
DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS AND TEAM RELATIONSHIPS
COMMUNICATION SKILLS IMPROVED
EMPATHY AND ALTRUISM
COMPASSIONATE
PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING
MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER OR HELP OTHERS
GREATER MENTAL FORTITUDE
MORE RESILIENT
A GREATER SENSE OF COMMITMENT
ENHANCED CAPACITY TO CHALLENGE THEMSELVES
SELF-MOTIVATED
PUSH THEMSELVES AND TO PERSEVERE
GREATER MENTAL FORTITUDE
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
CONFIDENCE
A GREATER SENSE OF MATURITY
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND CHANGE
SELF-WORTH AND SELF-BELIEF
ENHANCEMENT OF PRE-EXISTING SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SKILLS
IMPROVED FITNESS LEVELS

Conclusions & Policy Implications

Programmes, such as Gaisce, that can significantly improve the psychological attributes of its participants have positive implications for the psychological health of the nation's young people.

More widespread participation in programmes such as Gaisce would have positive implications for the psychological health of young people in Ireland and, in turn, a positive effect on demands for mental health services.

Further research should be done into programmes that promote the physical and mental health of the well-being of adolescents and young people.

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*“More **widespread participation** in programmes such as Gaisce would have **positive implications** for the psychological health of **young people** in Ireland.”*



Gaisce - The President's Award

Strategic Plan 2015- 2018

Vision 2030

Ireland - where young people dream big and fulfil their potential.

Mission

Provide opportunities for young people to realise their potential through personal challenges, facilitating the transition from young person to young adult and enhancing their potential and contribution as active participants in society

Values

Everything we do is driven by our core values.

- Respect for all those we work with and aim to serve,
- Striving for Excellence in the standards we set ourselves and expect from others
- A commitment to inclusion and equity in engaging with all young people.
- Participation by young people in directly shaping Gaisce, achieving their awards and contributing as active participants in society.

Our values are reflected in the Irish language saying: Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine (we live in each other's shadow).

Strategic Priorities and Planned Outcomes

1

Provide an innovative and challenging Gaisce programme.

Planned Outcomes

- A programme that young people choose to participate in and complete at each level.
- A programme that organisations that engage with young people aged 15-25 wish to deliver at each level.
- Quality standards in programme delivery.
- Evidence of outcome/impact.

4

Ensure Gaisce's sustainability to deliver

- Robust and transparent financial, legal, HR and governance systems/processes.
- Diversified and sustainable revenue streams that complement strategic priorities.
- Adequately resourced with respect to human resources, financial resources and technological resources.
- Staff, volunteers, Council and supporters take pride in being part of Gaisce.

3

Raise awareness and recognition of Gaisce and its contribution throughout Irish society

- Awareness of Gaisce amongst young people.
- Awareness of Gaisce amongst organisations that engage with young people aged 15-25.
- Awareness of Gaisce amongst potential sponsors and stakeholders.
- Awareness of the value/impact of Gaisce amongst young people, within the youth / youth work / youth empowerment sector and amongst policy makers.

2

Make Gaisce accessible to all young people and programme delivery effective and sustainable.

Planned Outcomes

- Diversity of access points into Gaisce.
- Reduction in barriers to participating in Gaisce.
- Best in class PAL and volunteer programme that attracts and retains volunteers in achieving Gaisce's mission/vision.
- Model of delivery that is effective and efficient and can respond to demand.

GAISCE IN 2014

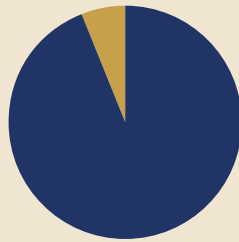


22,416
Award Applications
1.5% on 2013

12,916
Award Completions
+10% on 2013



101
Golds Awarded
1024
Silvers Awarded



94% of participants accessed via formal education setting; **6%** other route.

AWARDEES FROM NORTHERN IRELAND (JOINT AWARD SCHEME)

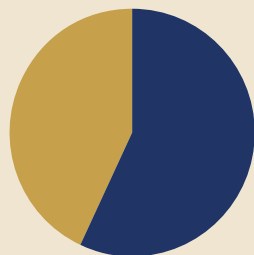


472

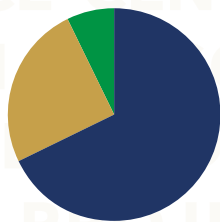
PALs Trained in 2014
(+75% on 2013)

1500

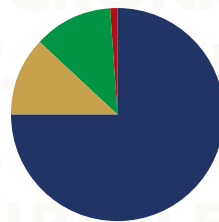
Active PALs Involved



57% of PALs trained from second level education ; **43%** of PALs trained from non-second level education



INCOME
€1,036,064
68% Grants
25% Participant Fee
7% Sponsorship



EXPENDITURE
75% Staffing
12% Programme
12% Office/Admin
1% Gov/Banking:

117,000

Unique Website
Visitors

6,082

Facebook Likes
(+62% in year)

1,062

Twitter Followers
(+186% in year)

The Gaisce Programme

Gaisce - The President's Award is a three-tiered personal development programme for young people aged 15 to 25. Combining self-directed challenges and structured supervision by an adult volunteer (President Award Leaders, or PAL), young people set and achieve a series of personal, physical and community challenges at Bronze, Silver or Gold level. In addition, they undertake an Adventure Journey and, at Gold level, a residential project is required. The patron of Gaisce is the President of Ireland and the programme is a challenge directly from the President to all young people in Ireland. Gaisce is an old Irish word that means 'achievement'.

	PERSONAL SKILL	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	PHYSICAL RECREATION	ADVENTURE JOURNEY	PLUS
Bronze	13 Hours	13 Hours	13 Hours	2 Days	Additional 13 hours on a personal, community or physical challenge of your choice.
Silver	26 Hours	26 Hours	26 Hours	3 Days	Additional 26 hours on a personal, community or physical challenge of your choice.
Gold	52 Hours	52 Hours	52 Hours	4 Days	Additional 26 hours on a personal, community or physical challenge