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Sustaining club-based health promotion in community sport settings: a systems and implementation science evaluation of the ‘More Than a Club (MTAC)’ model

Submission date
16/06/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
23/09/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
23/09/2026

Condition category
Other

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The More Than a Club (MTAC) initiative is a health promotion programme delivered through League of Ireland football clubs in partnership with the Football Association of Ireland. The initiative aims to support health, wellbeing, social inclusion, and community engagement through football club-led activities.

While many sport and health programmes show positive results, less is known about how such initiatives can be sustained over time within real-world community and organisational settings. This study aims to examine the organisational, governance, partnership, funding, and implementation factors that influence the long-term sustainability of MTAC across League of Ireland clubs. The study will also explore how football clubs can function as sustainable settings for community-based health promotion.

Who can participate?
Participants will include adults aged 18 years and older who are involved in the delivery, coordination, governance, or support of the MTAC initiative. This may include:
- Social and Environmental Sustainability (SES) officers
- MTAC programme coordinators
- League of Ireland club staff and representatives
- Football Association of Ireland staff
- Public health, community, and partner organisation representatives
- Stakeholders involved in sport, health, or community policy relevant to MTAC

What does the study involve?
The study will take place over four phases. The first phase involves a systematic review of existing research on sustainability within sport-for-health and community sport initiatives. The second phase will involve interviews, focus groups, and document analysis with stakeholders involved in MTAC delivery, governance, and support. This phase will examine organisational

structures, partnerships, governance arrangements, and wider policy and funding environments. The third phase will explore how MTAC is implemented and sustained in practice across different football clubs. This phase will involve interviews, focus groups, observations of meetings and programme activities, and review of programme monitoring information. The final phase will involve workshops and consultations with stakeholders to help develop a sustainability framework and practical guidance for the long-term development of MTAC. Participation in interviews, focus groups, or workshops is voluntary. Sessions are expected to last approximately 45–90 minutes and may be conducted online or in person.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no direct personal benefits associated with participating in the study. However, participants may contribute to improving understanding of how football-led health promotion initiatives can be sustained and strengthened over time. Findings may help support future planning, governance, partnerships, and delivery of community-based health programmes through football clubs. Risks associated with participation are expected to be minimal. Some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing organisational or implementation challenges. Participants will not be required to answer any questions they do not wish to answer and may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. All information shared during the study will be treated confidentially and anonymised during analysis and reporting.

Where is the study run from?
The study is being conducted by the Centre for Health Behaviour Research at South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland, in collaboration with the League of Ireland, the League of Ireland participating clubs and relevant stakeholders.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2026 to March 2028

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded through the SETU PhD Scholarship Programme.

Who is the main contact?
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Study information

Scientific Title
A longitudinal mixed-methods systems and implementation science evaluation of the sustainability of the More Than a Club (MTAC) football-led health promotion initiative within League of Ireland club-based community sport settings

Acronym
MTAC-SUSTAIN

Study objectives
The More Than a Club initiative is an emerging football-led health promotion model delivered through League of Ireland clubs, aiming to enhance health, wellbeing, social inclusion, and community engagement through community-based sport initiatives. While early evaluation findings indicate promising impacts across health, social, and community outcomes, there is currently limited understanding of the organisational, structural, and system-level conditions required to sustain and embed such initiatives within community sport settings over time. Existing evidence in sport-for-health research has largely focused on participant-level outcomes, with comparatively limited attention given to long-term sustainability, implementation processes, governance structures, organisational readiness, and economic resilience within real-world delivery systems. This observational study aims to examine the organisational and structural factors influencing the sustainability of the More Than a Club initiative within League of Ireland club-based community sport settings. Guided by systems thinking and implementation science approaches, the study will explore how sustainability is conceptualised, implemented, and maintained across participating clubs; identify barriers and facilitators influencing long-term delivery; and examine organisational readiness, governance structures, implementation capacity, partnership development, economic and resource-related influences, and system-level conditions shaping programme continuation. The study also aims to identify and model the organisational and structural conditions required to protect and sustain football-led health promotion delivery across League of Ireland clubs.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 05/05/2026, South East Technological University Research Ethics Committee (South East Technological University, Waterford Campus, Waterford, X91 K0EK, Ireland; +353 51 30200; ethics@setu.ie), ref: SETU/REC/25/26/89

Primary study design
Observational

Secondary study design
Longitudinal study

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Sustainability and implementation of football-led health promotion initiatives in community sport settings.

Interventions
This observational study adopts a longitudinal mixed-methods implementation science approach informed by systems thinking, the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), and the RE-AIM framework. The research investigates the sustainability of the More Than a Club football-led health promotion model across League of Ireland club-based community sport contexts.

Purposive sample procedures will be utilised to identify implementation-, organisational-, and system-level stakeholders participating in MTAC's delivery, coordination, governance,

partnership, or strategic oversight. Participants will include community officers, club staff, League of Ireland and Football Association of Ireland representatives, partner organisations, and policy and community stakeholders.

Data collection methods will include semi-structured interviews, organisational document analysis, observational fieldwork, implementation tracking, governance review, and systems mapping. Interviews will delve into perceptions and experiences related to sustainability, implementation processes, organisational readiness, governance structures, implementation capacity, partnership development, economic and resource-related influences, and system-level conditions influencing long-term programme continuation. Observational fieldwork and organisational analysis will be used to investigate how MTAC activities are integrated and operationalised in club and community settings over time.

Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028 and integrated to investigate the barriers and facilitators impacting implementation and sustainability in participating clubs. Data analysis will be guided by implementation science and systems approaches in order to identify and model the organisational and structural conditions required to support the long-term sustainability of football-led health promotion initiatives in community sport settings.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Sustainability of the More Than a Club initiative measured using semi-structured stakeholder interviews, organisational document analysis, implementation tracking, and RE-AIM maintenance assessment at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

2. Organisational readiness and implementation capacity supporting sustainability measured using CFIR-informed semi-structured interviews, organisational analysis, and observational fieldwork at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Barriers and facilitators influencing implementation and long-term maintenance measured using CFIR-informed stakeholder semi-structured interview and observational fieldwork at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

2. Organisational embedding of community health promotion within football clubs measured using organisational analysis, implementation tracking, governance review, and stakeholder semi-structured interviews at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

3. Economic and resource-related factors influencing sustainability measured using stakeholder semi-structured interviews, organisational assessment, funding and resource analysis, and document review at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

4. System-level influences on sustainability and implementation measured using systems mapping, stakeholder interviews, and policy and partnership analysis at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

5. Adaptations to More Than a Club delivery across club contexts measured using implementation tracking, observational fieldwork, and stakeholder semi-structured interviews at longitudinally between October 2026 and March 2028

Completion date
31/03/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Adults aged 18 years and over
2. Individuals involved in the delivery, coordination, governance, partnership, implementation or strategic oversight of the More Than a Club initiative
3. Community officers, club staff volunteers, League of Ireland representatives, Football Association of Ireland representatives, partner organisation representatives, or policy and community stakeholders
4. Proficient in written and spoken English
5. Ability to provide informed consent

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
100 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Individuals under 18 years of age
2. Individuals not involved in or connected to the delivery, coordination, governance, partnership, implementation, or strategic oversight of the More Than a Club initiative
3. Individuals unable to provide informed consent
4. Individuals not proficient in written and spoken English
5. Individuals unwilling to participate in study procedures

Date of first enrolment
01/10/2026

Date of final enrolment
31/03/2028

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Ireland

Sponsor information

Organisation
South East Technological University

ROR
https://ror.org/03fgx6868

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
South East Technological University

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available