



# Gaisce UCC CARL Programme 2020

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Research Study Highlights

## Gaisce UCC CARL Research Study 2020

**Do President's Award Leaders attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?**



Maxwells Dublin (2017)

## Abstract

Using Gaisce, The President's Award, Ireland's national youth achievement award programme, this study explores the role of the youth mentor within a non-formal learning environment and the importance and impact (if any) that President's Award Leaders (PALs) have on positive developments in such a national youth organisation. The conceptualisation of the role of PALs under three distinct categories: mentor; teacher; and volunteer is scrutinised. Drawing on both quantitative and semi-structured qualitative interviews, the value which school-based PALs perceive is attached to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce is discussed. Results acknowledge that while programme attrition rates and the "busyness" of teachers are factors of consideration, the overall consensus is that Gaisce teacher PALs have a significant impact on both the lives of their mentees and on Gaisce's organisational existence. While research findings also suggest the existence of positive levels of programme engagement and benefits gleaned from participation amongst students from Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) schools further research is required to examine such relationship dynamics. Observations surrounding the issue of safeguarding within youth organisations came to the fore in the course of this research. Recommendations related to the benefit of the adoption for a continuous, collaborative process of organisational learning and research was also suggested by the author of this study.

# A Community-Academic Research Links Project

Gaisce PAL Research 2020

## What is Community-Academic Research Links?

Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grass roots groups, single issue temporary groups, but also structured community organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.



## CARL seeks to:

- Provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education.
- Provide their services on an affordable basis.
- Promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology.
- Create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations.
- Enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- Enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers ([www.livingknowledge.org](http://www.livingknowledge.org)).

## Why is this report on the UCC website?

The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

## How do I reference this report?

The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Gaisce school PALs on which the this project is based. We would like to acknowledge the support of Dr Máire Leane, Dr Yvonne McKenna, Dr Anna Kingston and Dr Féilim O'hAdhmaill with this study.

## How do I reference this report?

Mangan (2020), *Do PALs attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?* [online], Community-Academic Research Links/University College Cork, Ireland, Available from: <http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/completed/> [Accessed on: date]

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## Gaisce UCC CARL Research Study 2020

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**Do President's Award Leaders attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?**

### CONTEXT OF STUDY



Maxwells Dublin (2019)

## **1: Context of Study**

Gaisce – The President’s Award (GTPA), is a personal development programme for young people, which enhances confidence and wellbeing through participation in personal, physical and community challenges (Gaisce, 2019). Launched in October 1985 by President Dr Patrick Hillary, it is worth noting that the awards scheme was designed during a period of significant economic change, and subsequent social change in Ireland. As evidenced by Dukelow and Considine (2017, p. 101), ‘The 1980’s is not a decade that is fondly remembered – massive emigration, high unemployment, high interest rates, high inflation, cutbacks in social services and inadequate social welfare payments made life a tough grind for many’. The Gaisce Awards was one of the initiatives undertaken by the Government at the time, in response to the changing social landscape and a desire to implement a more effective and all-inclusive national youth policy. This social cataclysm led, in part, to the establishment of the National Youth Policy Committee (NYPC) in 1984, whose stated terms of reference, under the Chair of Mr. Justice Costello was:

To prepare for Government consideration recommendations for a National Youth Policy which would be aimed at assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active participants in society. (NYPC, 1984, p. 8)

As evidenced by the National Youth Policy Committee (1984), the primary philosophical theory underpinning the structure of the recommended Gaisce Awards was that of representative democracy, which promoted the concept of active citizenship, public spirit and the encouragement of youth participation in the social and political life of the community. Consummate with this philosophy was the stated focus of promoting the positive self-development of young people, ‘particularly those in most need of opportunity and inspiration’, to partake in the Awards for the ‘betterment of their communities’ (Gaisce, 1996).

Consequently, the central tenet to these Awards is the creation of an non-competitive youth achievement framework, which promotes the values of empowerment, inclusion, equality, respect and excellence, and which ‘enables young people to carve their own path to self-discovery’ (Gaisce, 2019, p. 2).

Since the formation in 1985, the Gaisce Awards, administered under the auspices of the President’s Awards Council, have been open to all individuals aged between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, who reside on the island of Ireland. The Awards are constructed as a progressive series, designated as Bronze, Silver and Gold achievements (McKenna, 2019). Since commencement of the Awards programme in 1985, 190,000 participants have received Awards (McKenna, 2019). Gaisce (2019, p. 2) appraises the scheme, stating that ‘Participant volunteers are encouraged to dream big and fulfil their potential’ and are, subsequently, tested by a progressive leisure-time Award Challenge programme. The programme requires the completion of a community involvement initiative, personal skills development, physical recreation and an Adventure Journey challenge.

## **1.2: Objectives of Study**

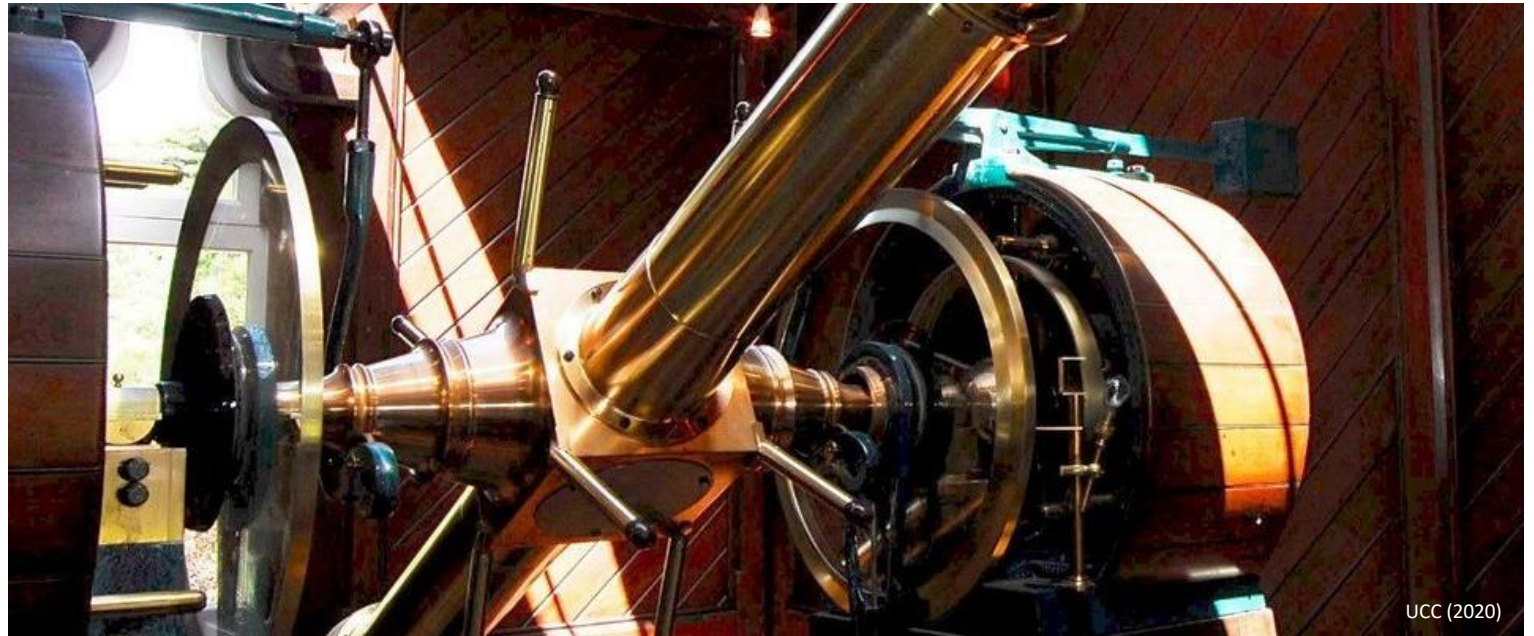
A subsidiary objective of the programme (which aids the primary objective of the programme) is to promote intergenerational volunteer engagement, with adults being encouraged ‘to give their time on a voluntary basis in furtherance of the awards’ (Gaisce, 1996, p. 2). At each Award level, participants are allocated a President’s Awards Leader (PAL) who acts as a mentor and provides personal support for growth and positive personal development. One thousand two hundred Irish secondary school teachers are intrinsically linked to the programme, in furtherance of the aims and objectives of Gaisce. They advocate for the award programme and act as volunteers and mentors to a cohort of secondary school pupils. Accordingly, Gaisce mentors assist in the determination of goals, provide administrative support, aid Adventure Journey planning and offer on-going mentoring, advice, positive youth encouragement and practical support. To support the development of PALs, Gaisce promotes Gaisce Award Leader courses, which are appropriately designed to assist in ‘implementing the system of Awards’ (Gaisce, 1996). The essential importance of Gaisce’s 1,200 volunteer PALs are further explored by McKenna (2019, p. 1):

PALs are central to the design of Gaisce, and without PALs, Gaisce doesn’t exist. While Gaisce has been established in the national consciousness for over 34 years, there’s a lot we don’t know about the experience of PALs.

It is within this context of youth mentoring, development and impact in a non-formal learning environment that this research study seeks to acquire a fuller understanding of the role, importance and impact (if any) that PALs have on positive developments in such a national youth organisation.

To address the identified knowledge gap in this area and to aid further understanding, the author of this research proposal is endeavouring to explore the experiences of Gaisce mentors. The research approach is scaffolded as follows: understanding mentor identity; mentor characteristics and behaviours; the mentors' perception of their role and how it is valued. The research question is framed accordingly.

**'Do President's Award Leaders (PALs) attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?'**



## Gaisce UCC CARL Research Study 2020 : Section 2

### Methodology

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## **2: Research Methodology**

This research proposal has focused on the following question: ‘Do PALs attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President’s Award’s self-development programme?’ A mixed methods methodology was employed in this study, comprising of a quantitative study (Survey A online) and a qualitative study (Survey B audio interviews). The participants used in the sample base for this quantitative research study were drawn from Gaisce’s database of one thousand two hundred active Gaisce school PALs who are registered and accredited with Gaisce, vetted by An Garda Síochána, and are active implementers of the Gaisce Awards programme in both DEIS and non-DEIS secondary schools. The details of the Gaisce PAL survey were communicated by Gaisce’s CEO, Yvonne McKenna, who informed potential participants about the nature and purpose of the study. A total of eighty-seven secondary school Gaisce PAL participants responded positively by partaking the survey.

### **2.1: PAL Research: Quantitative Study A : Participants and Methodology**

Prospective Gaisce PAL survey participants were invited to click an embedded survey link, which directed respondents to complete an online Google PAL survey form. The online survey commenced on Tuesday 12 May 2020 and concluded on Sunday 14 June 2020. Survey timings were scheduled to coincide with the end of the secondary school academic year, which occurred on Friday 29 May 2020.. Each online survey lasted twenty minutes on average. Participants were asked twenty-seven closed-ended questions and twelve open-ended questions (see Appendix J). Survey respondents were encouraged to express their opinions and make observations about their role as a Gaisce mentor and the field of mentoring. Questions on the subject of PAL mentorship were categorised in line with the study carried out by Silke et al. (2019) - *Relational dynamics in youth mentoring: A mixed-methods study*, and included the following categories: mentor characteristics and behaviours, motivational reasoning, the mentor’s role and understanding, the benefits and challenges of being a mentor, and the perception of the programme’s support. A further category on the effectiveness of the Gaisce programme was added by the lead researcher. The survey closed on Sunday 14 June and the data was downloaded on Monday 15 June. An anonymised record of the participants’ responses is enclosed (see Appendix A)

## **2.2: PAL Research: Qualitative Study B: Participants and Methodology**

The sample for qualitative study B was drawn from the database of one thousand two hundred active school PALs. For this qualitative research project, ten Gaisce PAL secondary school interviewees were selected based on an educational criterion, as evidenced by the Department of Education and Skills (2018), which is representative of the current national student demographic of 371,500 students across 723 schools in Ireland. Furthermore, of the current population of secondary school students, 76,000 are DEIS school attendees, representing 20% of Ireland's secondary school student population (2018, p. 3). Consequently, as a representative sample, this study recruited eight Gaisce PALs working in non-DEIS schools and two Gaisce PAL participants from DEIS schools. Moreover, of the eight PALs who worked in DEIS schools, further consideration for the selection of candidates was the criterion that the PAL participants should work in schools representing a broad socio-economic and gender mix.. The participants chosen for the research programme worked in the following schools: a fee-paying mixed gender school, a fee-paying single-sex boys school, a fee-paying single-sex girls school, a non-fee-paying mixed gender school, a non-fee-paying single-sex boys school, and a non-fee-paying single-sex girls school.

As the programme represents a joint partnership initiative between Gaisce and UCC, final non-biased considerations resulted in Gaisce development officers identifying half the potential interviewees, with the remaining participants being identified by UCC's lead researcher, Philip Mangan. Apart from being over the age of eighteen, the only other selection criterion was that participants were active PALs based in secondary schools. The ten participants were recruited via phone or email contact; Gaisce made initial contact with five of the potential interviewees and the other five interviewees were contacted by Philip Mangan.

Following initial contact from Gaisce, the follow-up participatory process was enacted by Philip Mangan, at which stage an outline of the purpose and nature of the study, as well as pre-screening requirements, were made clear. The interviewees were asked a series of thirty-eight questions. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, all qualitative interviews were conducted over the phone. For the purposes of data collection, survey responses were recorded using a telephone audio recorder. The recordings were only used for the stated purpose and were not broadcast or used for any other purposes. All data was stored in a password protected UCC digital repository. Each interview lasted forty minutes on average. Participants were asked twelve closed-ended questions to establish their demographics, and then the rest of the interview was conducted on an open-ended basis (see Appendix P).

### **2.3: PAL Research: Qualitative Study B: Timings and Methodology**

The interviews commenced on Monday 11 May 2020 and concluded on Saturday 16 May 2020. Survey timings were scheduled to coincide with the end of the secondary school academic year, which occurred on Friday 29 May 2020. A total of ten secondary school Gaisce PAL participants partook in the interviews.

Questions on the subject of PAL mentorship included the following categories: mentor characteristics and behaviours, motivational reasoning, the mentor's role and understanding, the benefits and challenges of being a mentor, and the perception of the programme's support. A further category on the effectiveness of the Gaisce programme was added by the lead researcher.

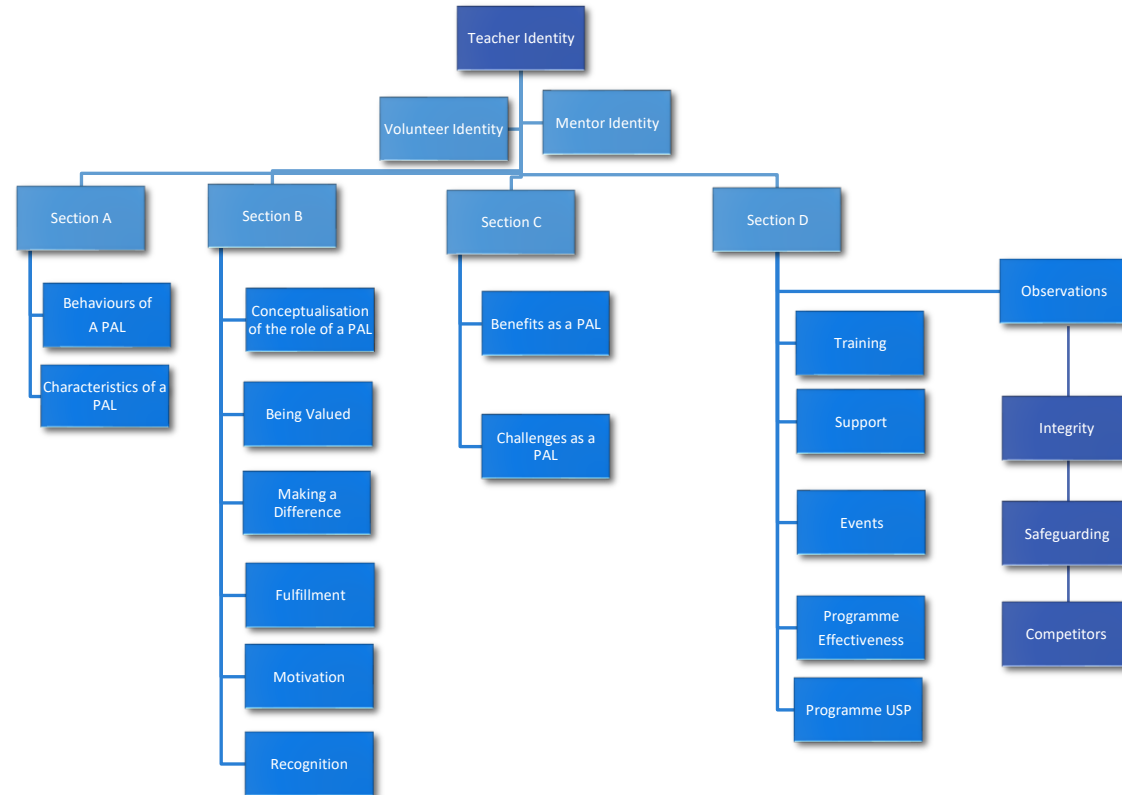
At the data analysis stage, all the interviews were fully transcribed into Microsoft Word and analysed. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework was adhered to, as researchers focused solely on answers relevant to the research questions. The data analysis included the categorisation of emerging themes.

# Gaisce UCC CARL Research Study 2020

## Gaisce PAL Research Themes

- Section A: Behaviours and Characteristics
- Section B: Conceptualisation of Role
- Section C: Benefits and Challenges
- Section D: Support and Effectiveness
- Observations

Research Themes



# Results Section A

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## Gaisce PAL Research Theme

- Characteristics and Behaviours
- Discussion Findings



## Q 1A. What Counties do Gaisce PALs Work in?

County of Work of Gaisce PAL Participants					
	Respondents			Respondents	
Carlo	2	2%	Monaghan	2	2%
Clare	2	2%	Offaly	1	1%
Cork	12	14%	Roscommon	1	1%
Donegal	5	6%	Sligo	1	1%
Dublin	25	29%	Tipperary	4	5%
Galway	3	4%	Waterford	2	2%
Kerry	2	2%	Westmeath	3	4%
Kildare	3	4%	Wexford	5	6%
Kilkenny	2	2%	Wicklow	2	2%
Laois	2	2%	Cavan	0	
Louth	1	1%	Leitrim	0	
Limerick	3	4%	Longford	0	
Mayo	2	2%			
Meath	2	2%			

Q.A1: 87 Respondents: Characteristics

It is significant that the operating territory of Gaisce – The President’s Award covers the counties of the Republic of Ireland only. Among the counties where PALs worked, Dublin emerged as the most prevalent, with 29% of the respondents, while the second, third, and fourth highest numbers of participants lived in Cork, Donegal, and Wexford. No participants from Cavan, Leitrim, or Longford took part in this survey.

Figure 1. Gaisce UCC PAL Research Participants’ County of Work.

## Q 2A. What is the Duration of Educational Service of a Gaisce PAL?

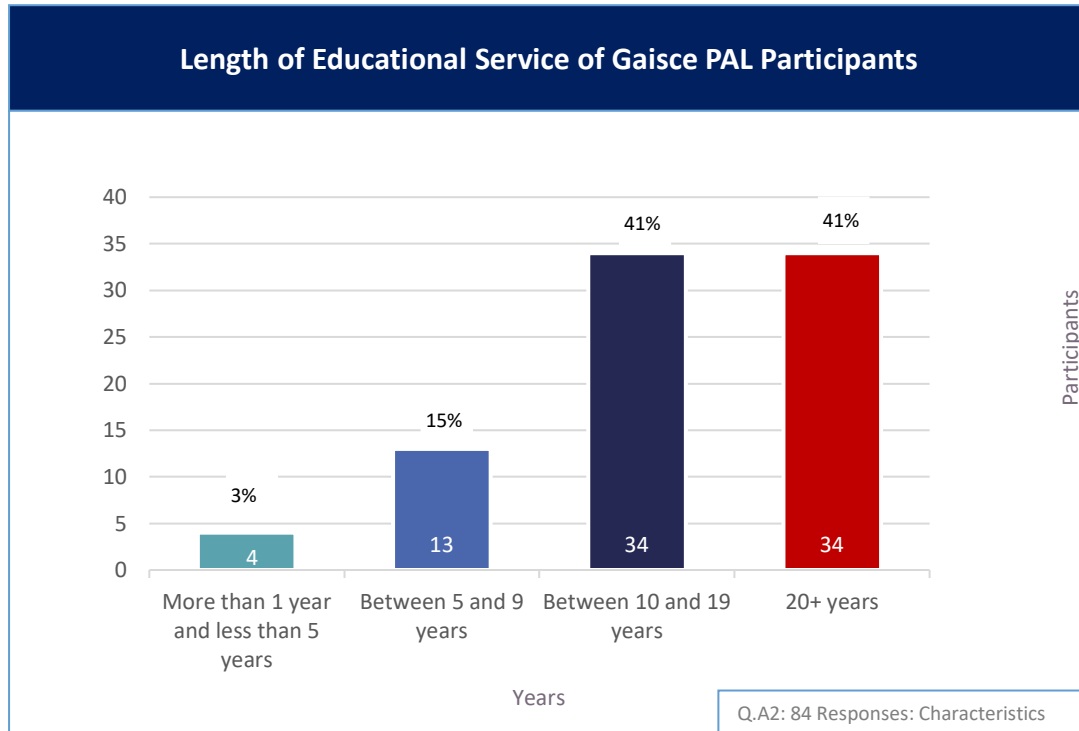
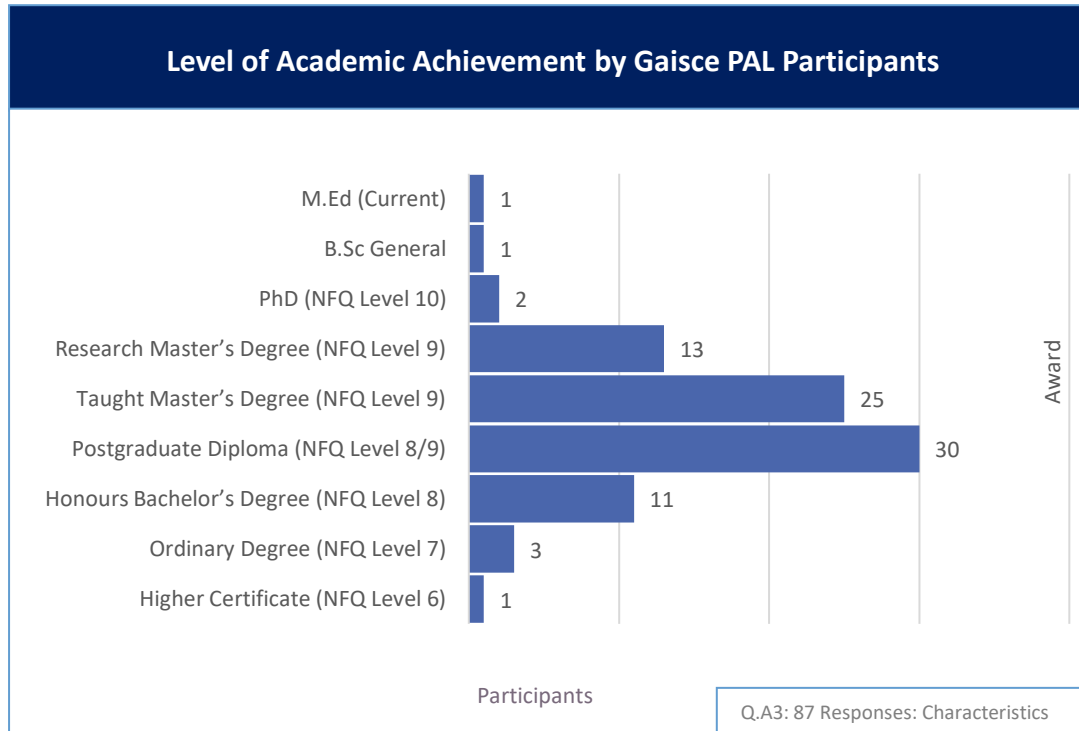


Figure 2. PAL Participants' Length of Service in Educational Establishments.

Participants across the general sample group had a significant level of educational experience, with 82% of PAL respondents having ten years' educational experience or more. Further analysis also showed that less than 3% of respondents had between more than one year and less than five years' experience working in the educational sector.

### Q 3A. What Educational Levels have Gaisce PALs Attained?



As illustrated in Figure 3, when asked in question three about the highest level of educational achievement they attained, the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level nine emerged as the most popular level achieved by participants. Two Gaisce PAL respondents had achieved a Doctor of Philosophy Degree.

Figure 3. PAL Participants' Highest Level of Academic Achievement.

## Q 4A. What are the Positions or Roles of Gaisce PALs in Secondary Schools?

Prescribed Titles of Gaisce Pals in Secondary Schools			
Roles	Respondents	Roles	Respondents
Assistant Principal	12	Teacher and Acting Year Head	1
Deputy Principal	3	Teacher and Year Head	1
Director of Formation and Services	1	Teacher English and Guidance Counsellor	2
Guidance Counsellor	3	Teacher English and Meitheal Co-ordinator	2
Head of Physical Education	1	Teacher English and Physical Education	2
Programmes Co-ordinator	5	Teacher Home Economics and B Post Holder	2
TY Co-ordinator and Teacher	7	Teacher Maths, PE and CSPE	1
TY Co-ordinator	10	Teacher Physical Education	2
TY Head	2	Teacher Physical Education and B Post Holder	1
Special Needs Co-ordinator	1	Teacher and Programmes Co-ordinator	1
PAL – Parent at School	1	Teacher of Irish, History and English	1
Teacher Newly Qualified	1	Teachers	32

Q.A4: 87 respondents: Characteristics

Figure 4. PAL Participants' Occupation Titles.

Question four above focused on the current positions held by Gaisce Secondary School PALs. While the responses revealed that 66% of participants had classified their position as 'teacher', further analysis revealed that 20% of respondents held a B Post or higher school management or leadership role.

## Q 5A. What is the Age of Gaisce Teacher PALs?

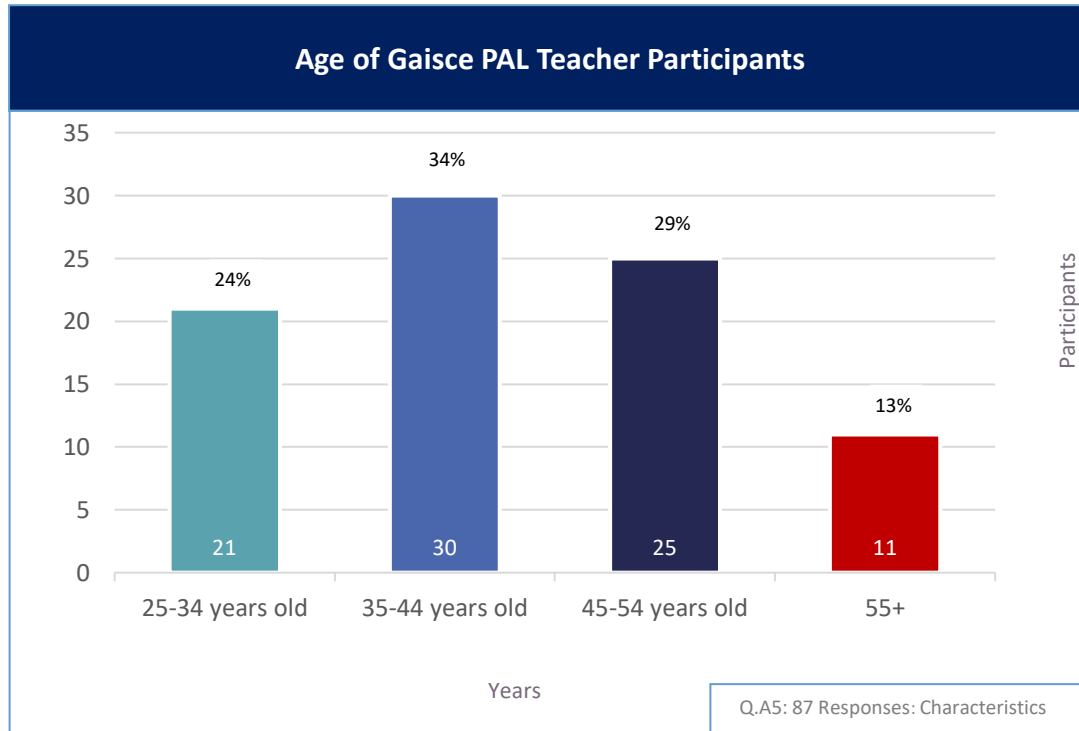


Figure 5. PAL Participants' Age Range.

The results indicated in Figure 5 above highlight that 76% of Gaisce School PALs are over 35 years old, while 63% of respondents range in age from 35 to 54 years old. Meanwhile, the upper age threshold of 55 years or older constitutes 13% of respondents. Ancillary analysis further revealed that 24% of PAL respondents are aged between 25–35 years.

## Q 6A. What is the Gender of Gaisce School PALs ?

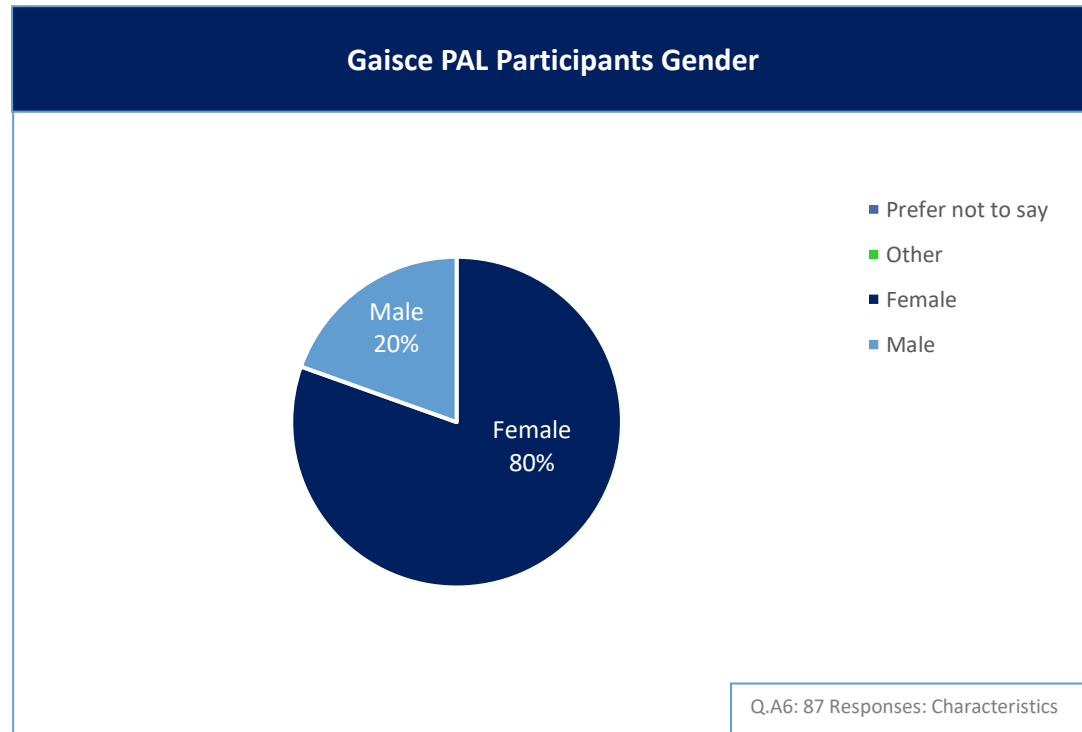


Figure 6. PAL Participants' Gender.

Of the 87 school-based Gaisce PALs who took part in Survey A, 80% were female.

## Q 7A. What Type of Schools do Gaisce PALs Work in?

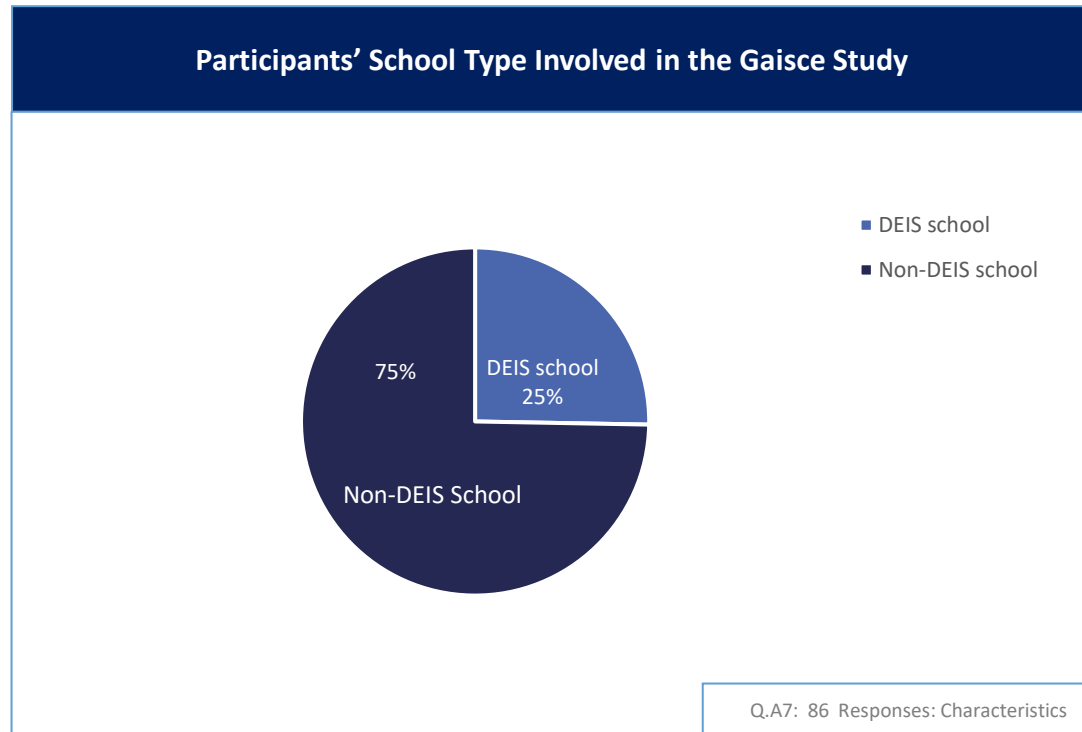


Figure 7. Categorisation of PALs' Place of Work.

Question seven focused on the Department of Education's (2018) school classification of DEIS and non-DEIS schools. It established that 75% of participants currently work in non-DEIS schools. Of significance, in this survey DEIS schools accounted for 25% of the total cohort of institutions.

## Q 8A. What is the Gender Categorisation of Gaisce PAL Participants' Schools?

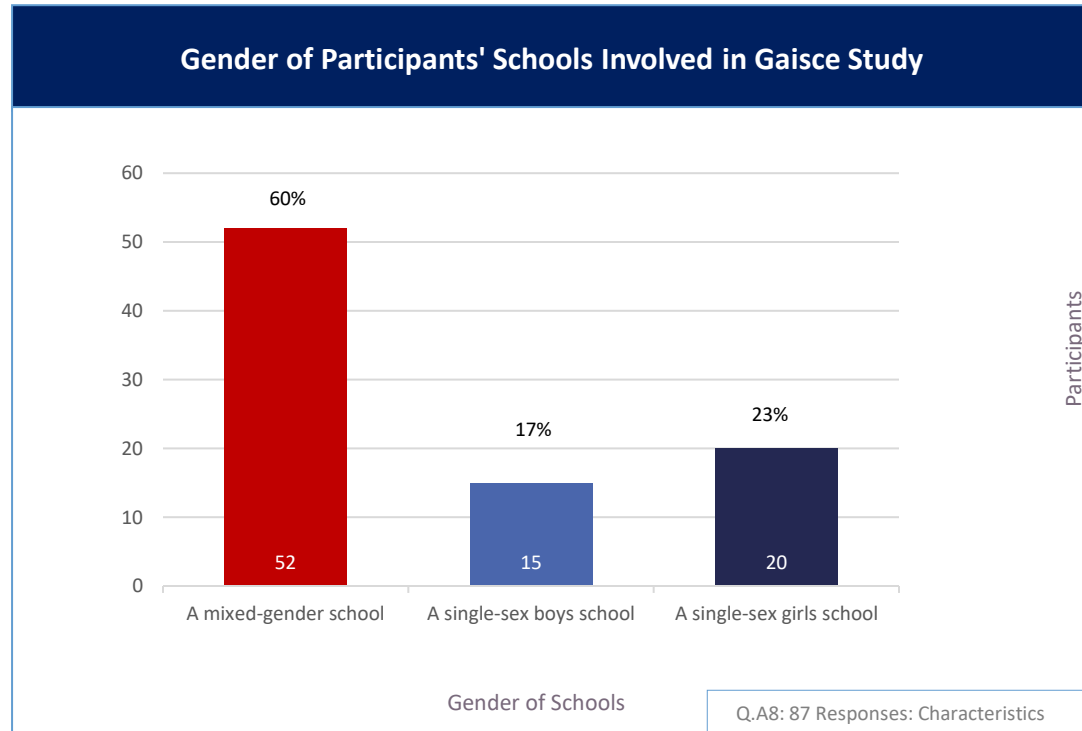


Figure 8. Categorisation of Participants' Schools by Gender.

When asked to categorise the gender of their school, 60% of Gaisce PAL participants reported their schools as being 'a mixed-gender school'.

### Q 9A. What is the Pupil Size of Gaisce PAL Participants' Schools?

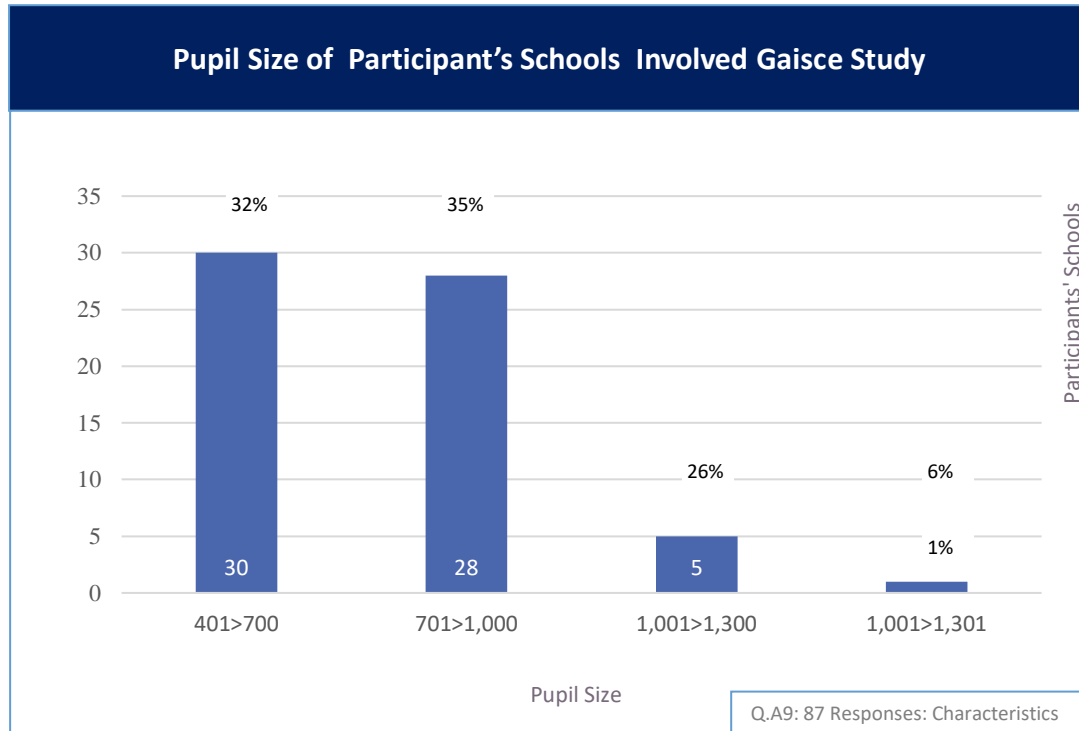
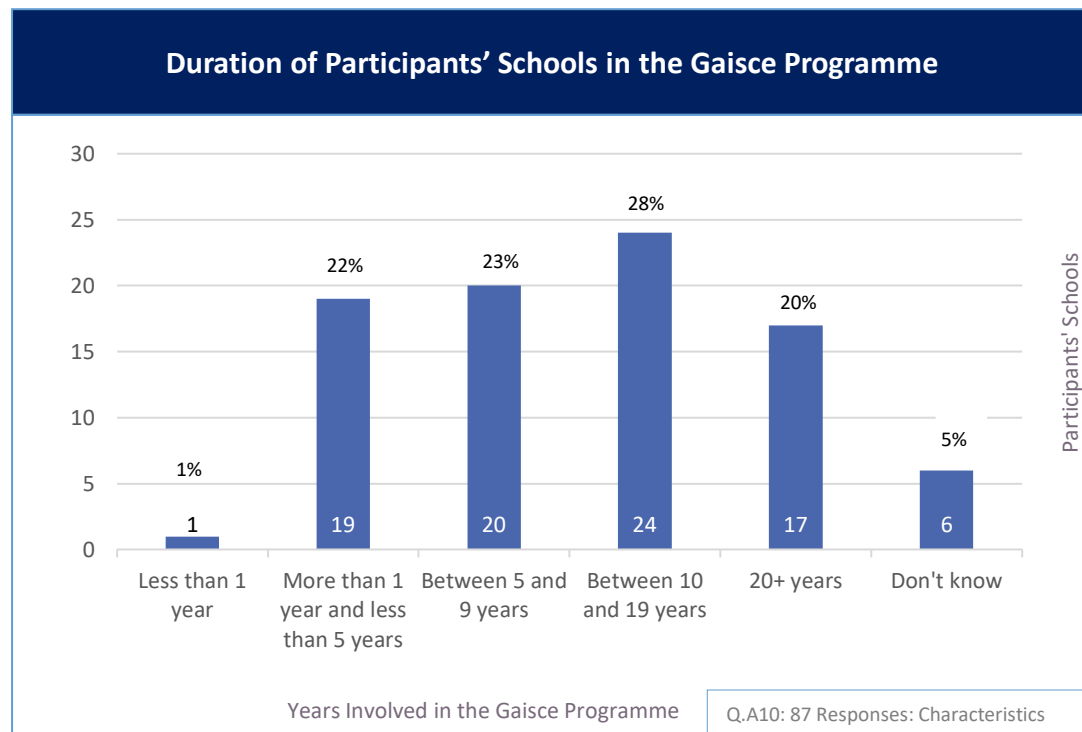


Figure 9. Pupil Size of PAL Participants' Schools Involved in the Gaisce Programme.

As illustrated in Figure 9, 74% of Gaisce PAL participants work in schools which have more than 400 pupils. Further analysis reveals that one Gaisce PAL is employed in a secondary school whose roll numbers exceed 1,300 students.

**Q 10A. How Long Have Participants' Schools Been Involved in the Gaisce Programme?**



Results as indicated in Figure 10 reveal that 71% of Gaisce PAL schools have been involved in the Gaisce programme for more than five years. Furthermore, 48% of participants' schools have run the Gaisce programme for more than 10 years.

Figure 10. Duration of Participants' Schools Involvement in the Gaisce Programme.

## Q 11A. What Type of Gaisce Awards do Participants' Schools Offer?

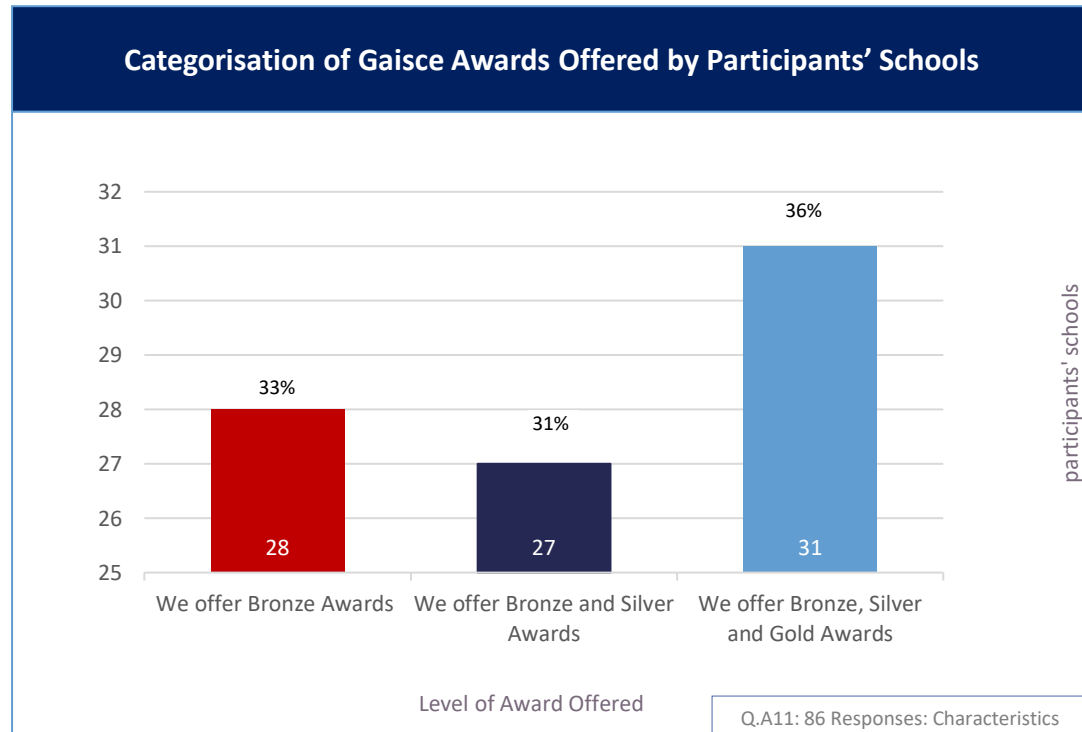


Figure 11. Categorisation of Gaisce Awards Offered by Participants' Schools.

Figure 11 demonstrates that 33% of respondents' schools only offer the Gaisce Bronze Award, while 64% of the PALs surveyed specified that their schools did not offer Gaisce participants the opportunity to progress to a Gold Award.

**Q 12A. Is Prior Involvement in the Gaisce Programme a Factor of Influence for becoming a Gaisce PAL?**

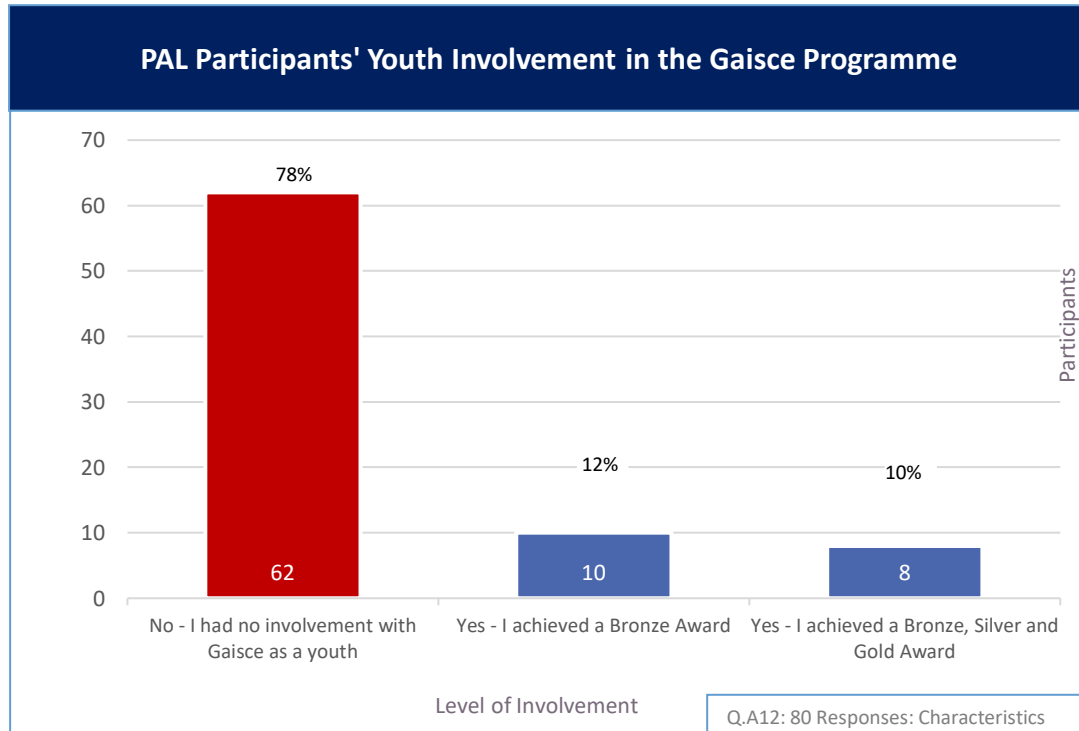


Figure 12 demonstrates that 78% of PAL participants had no previous involvement with Gaisce as a youth. The findings also indicated that 10% of respondents had achieved a Gaisce Gold Award.

Figure 12. Participants' Involvement in the Gaisce Programme as a Youth.

### Q 13A. How Many Years have Participants been Gaisce PALs?

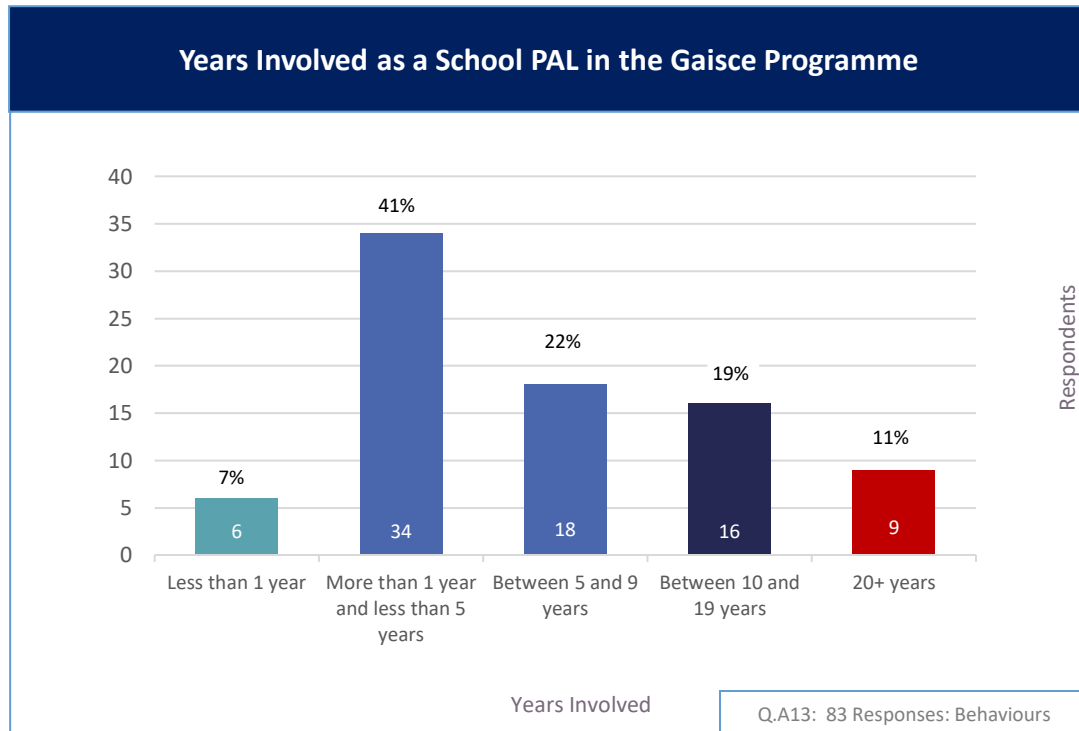


Figure 13. Duration of PAL Participants' Involvement in the Gaisce Programme.

When participants were asked how long they had been a Gaisce PAL in question 13, more than one year and less than five years emerged as the most popular choice, with over 41% of PALs represented in this cohort. However, it should be noted that 52% of respondents have more than ten years' experience running the Gaisce programme in their respective schools.

## Q 14A. How did School Teacher Respondents Become Gaisce PALs?

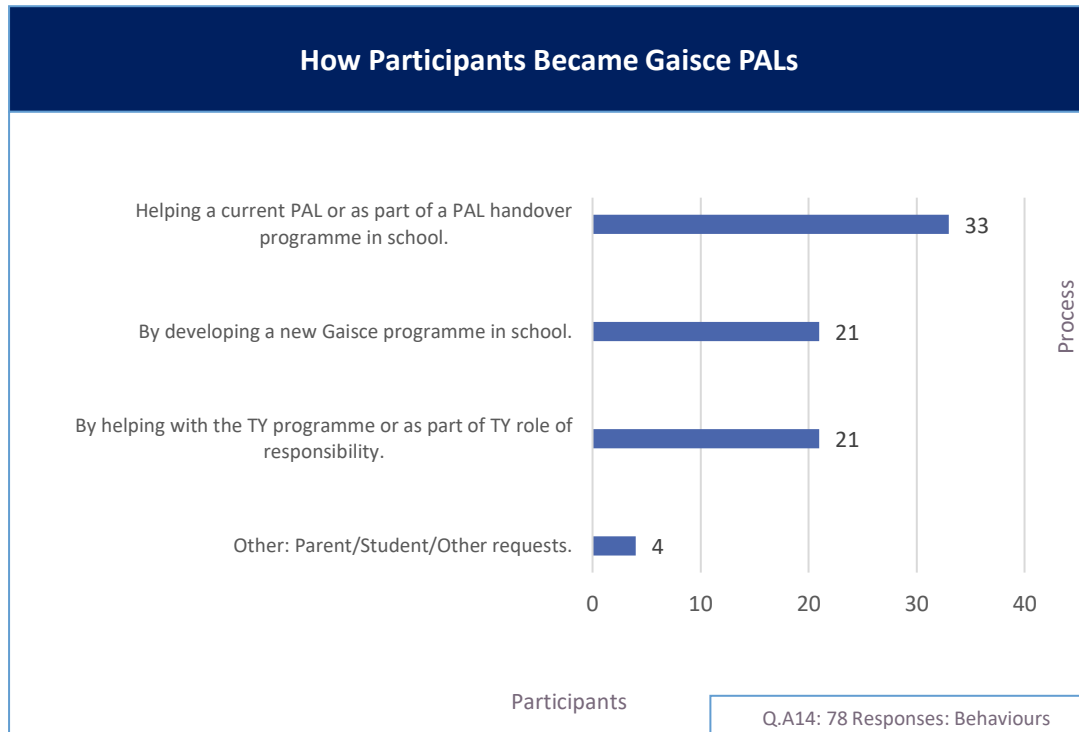


Figure 14. How Participants Became Gaisce PALs in their Schools.

Figure 14 provides a descriptive summary of the process by which participants became Gaisce PALs. Results show that 42% of the respondents became involved in the Gaisce programme by ‘helping a current PAL or as part of a handover programme in school’. The findings also indicate that 27% of respondents became Gaisce PALs by developing a new Gaisce programme in their school, while a further 27% of participants entered the leadership programme by ‘helping with the TY programme or as part of a TY role of responsibility’.

### Q 15A. In Schools, do PALs Work Alone or as Part of a Wider Team?

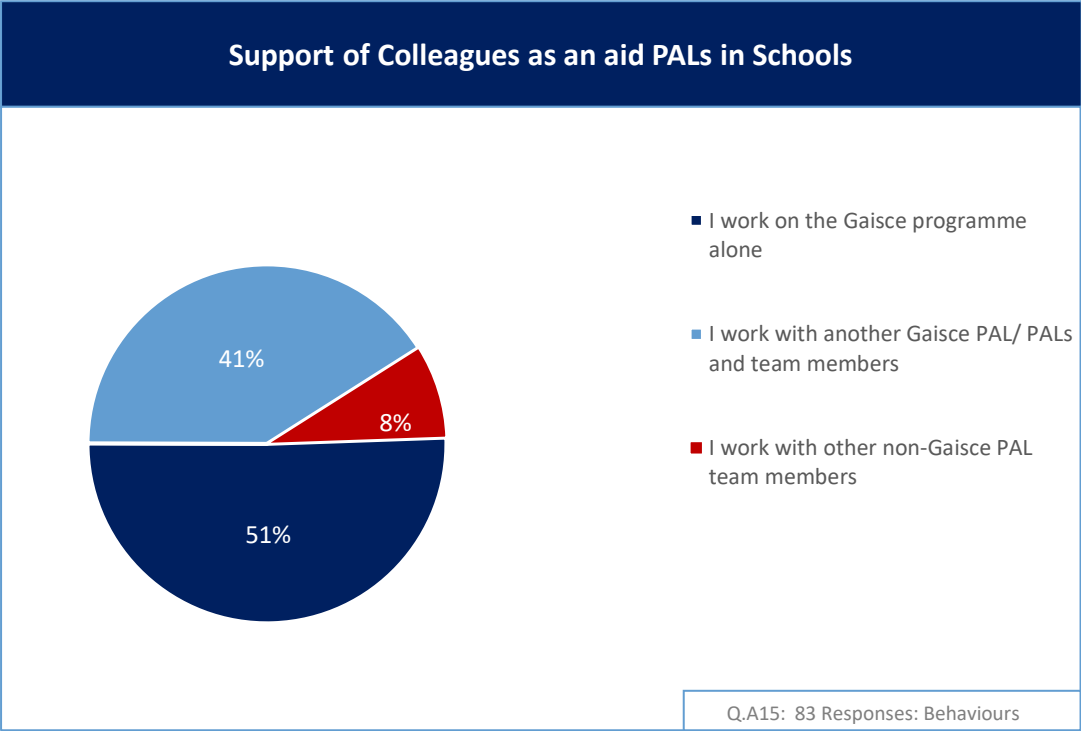


Figure 15. Support Assistance of Gaisce PAL Colleagues in Secondary Schools.

Figure 15 shows that 51% of PAL respondents work alone. Further analysis also showed that during the academic year 2019/2020, Gaisce school-based PALs managed, on average, 33 Bronze Award participants.

**Q 16A. How Many Bronze, Silver, or Gold Participants do PALs Manage?**

<b>Weekly Time Spent by PALs Volunteering in non-Gaisce Activity</b>			
	Total Number Per Survey Response	Participant Response Rate	Participants Managed Per PAL Response
<b>Participants Managed Bronze</b>	2546	76	<b>33</b>
<b>Participants Managed Silver</b>	204	13	<b>15</b>
<b>Participants Managed Gold</b>	72	4	<b>18</b>

Q.A16: A16B: A16C: 87 Respondents: Characteristics

Figure 16. Participants Managed by Gaisce PAL Respondents from September 2019 to Date.

Figure 16 demonstrates that while there were in excess of 2,500 Bronze Award participants in the respondents' groups collectively, they only managed 204 Silver participants during the same time period. This represented an average of 15 Silver Awardees per respondent during this time.

## Q 17A. Do School PALs Attend Gaisce Organised Ceremonies?

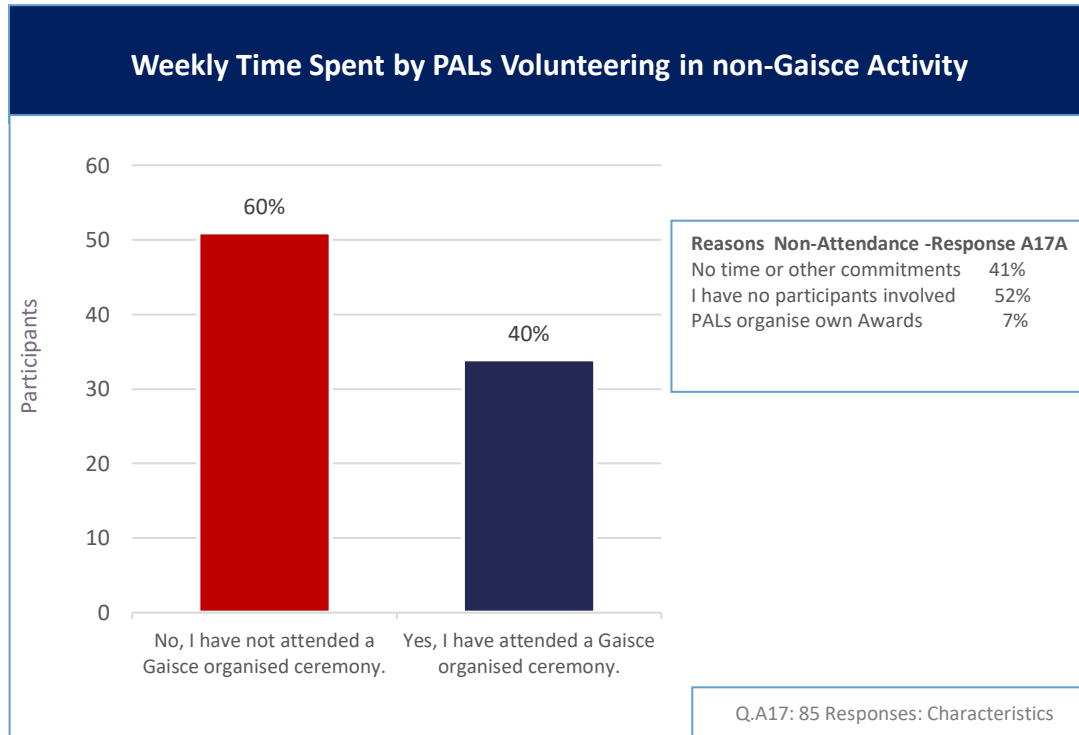
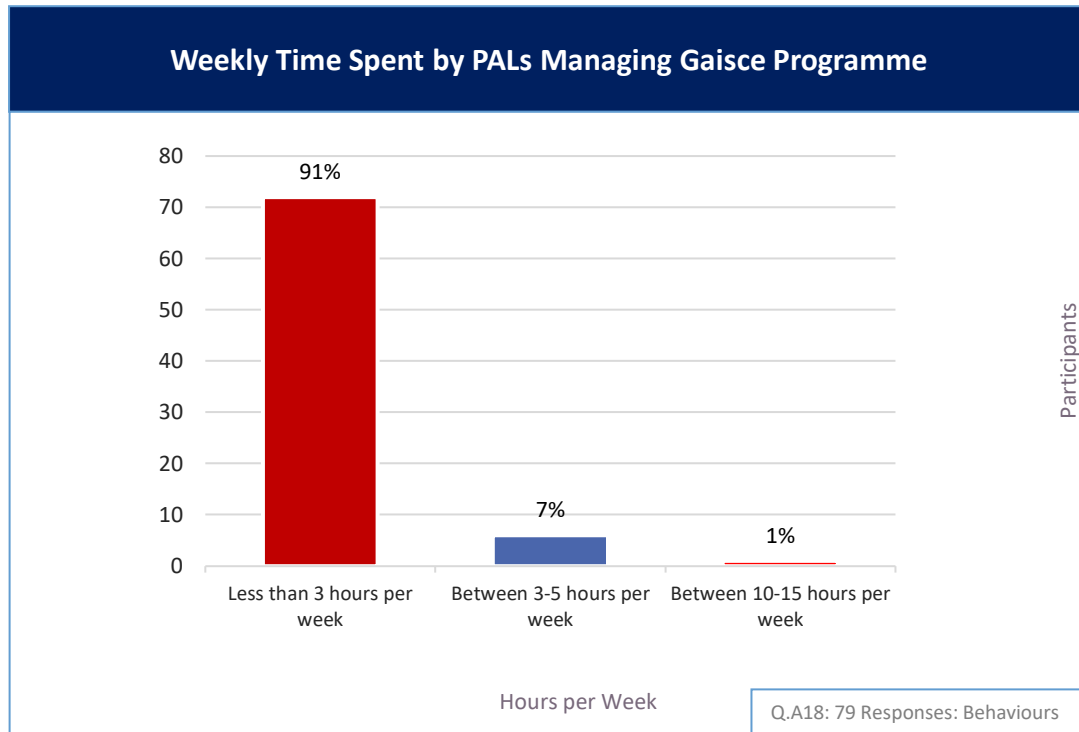


Figure 17. Attendance by PAL Participants at a Gaisce Organised Ceremony.

The results shown in Figure 17 demonstrate that 60% of PAL participants have never attended a ceremony organised by Gaisce. Furthermore, while 52% of respondents rationalised that they had ‘no participants involved’, 41% stated that non-attendance was due to having ‘no time or other commitments’.

### Q 18A. How Much Weekly Time do PALs Give to Managing Gaisce Participants?



Time was also at the forefront in Figure 18, which illustrates how 91% of PAL participants surveyed spent less than three hours per week implementing the Gaisce Award Programme in their schools.

Figure 18. Weekly Time Spent by Gaisce School PALs Managing the Gaisce Programme.

### Q 19A. How Much Weekly Time do PALs Give to non-Gaisce Volunteering?

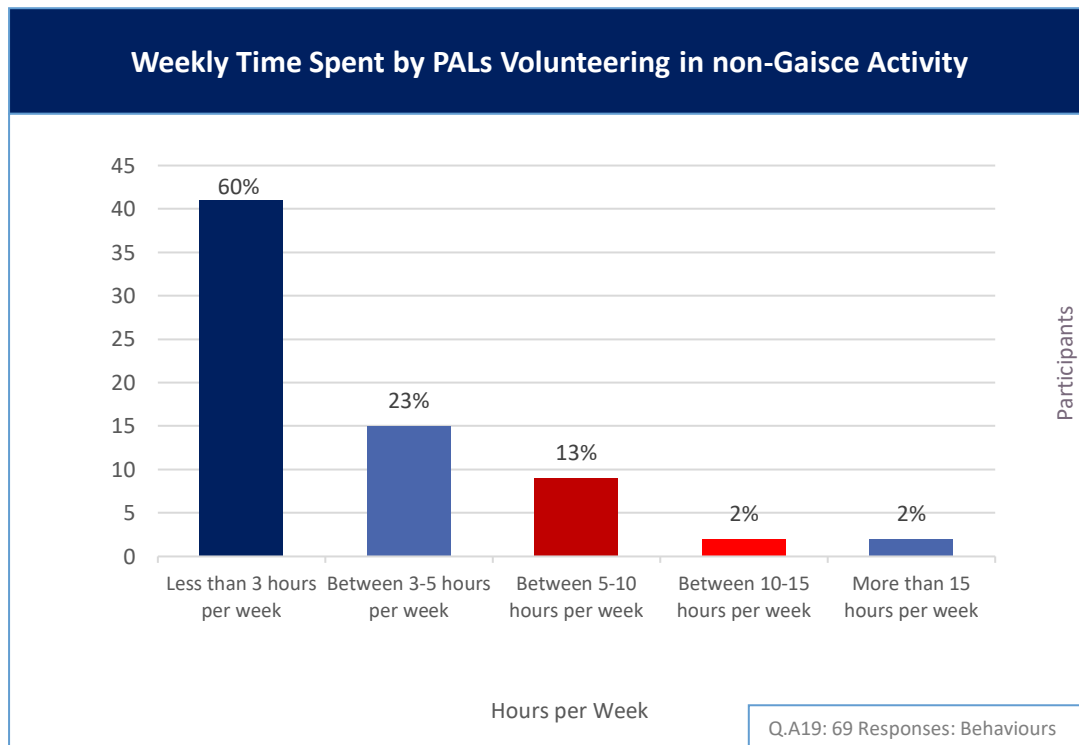


Figure 19. PAL Participants' Time Given to non-Gaisce Volunteering on a Weekly Basis.

Participants across the general sample group demonstrated a significant level of commitment to volunteering activity. As can be seen in Figure 19 above, 40% of Gaisce PALs spent more than three hours per week volunteering for non-Gaisce voluntary activities.

## Q 20A. What Type of Volunteering Activity do PALs Undertake?

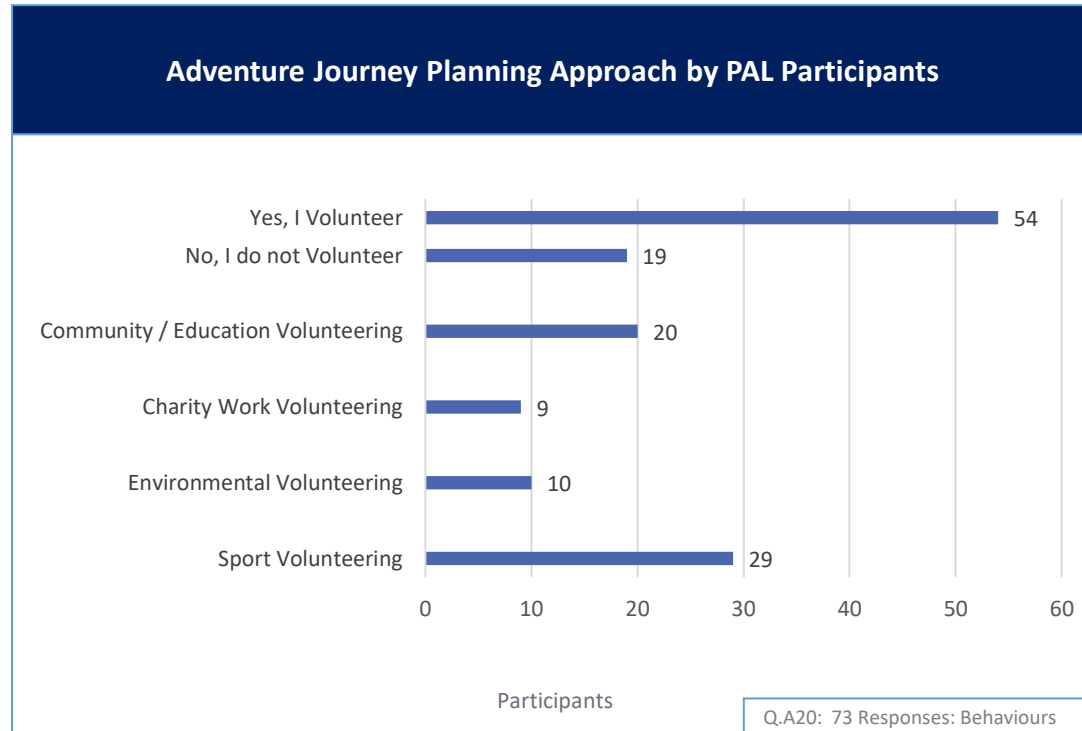


Figure 20. Non-Gaisce Volunteering by Gaisce PAL Participants by Type.

As evidenced in Figure 20 below, 74% of PAL Survey A respondents professed to actively volunteering, with sporting activities being the most popular activity undertaken, at 43%. Community/Education volunteering was also a popular choice of activity, ranking second among participants, at 29% of the total.

## Q 21A. How do PALs Organise their Adventure Journeys?

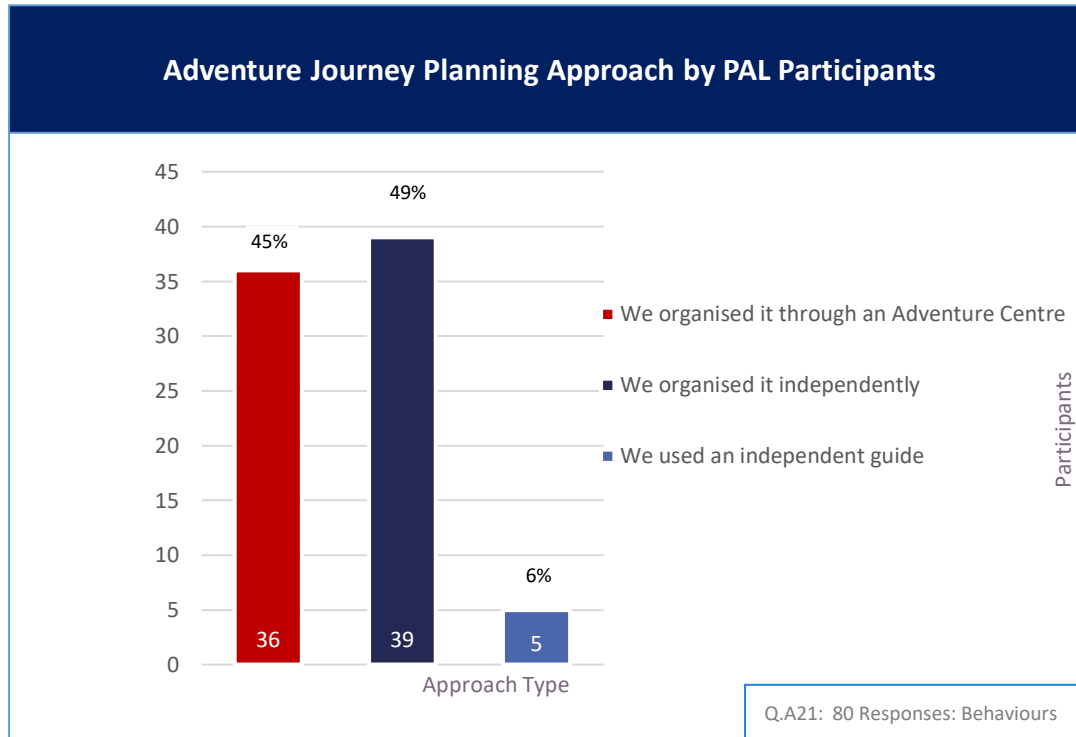
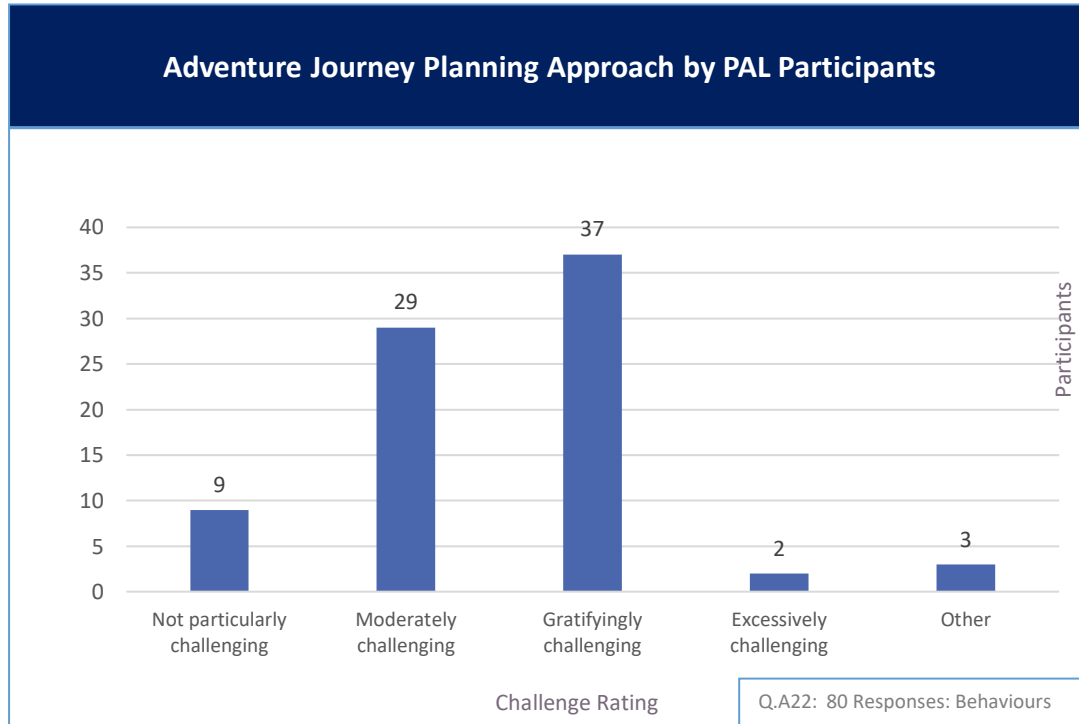


Figure 21. Adventure Journey Planning Approach by PAL Participants.

The results, as shown in Figure 21, indicate that 45% of PAL participants organised their Adventure Journey through an adventure centre. The findings also indicated that 49% of the respondents self-planned their Journeys, with a further 5% of respondents availing of the services of an independent guide.

## Q 22A. How do PALs Rate the Physical Nature of the Adventure Journey they are Expected to Partake in as PALs?



Overall, an examination of participant responses to question 22 below highlighted that 83% of Gaisce PAL school respondents found their Adventure Journeys to be ‘moderately and/or gratifyingly challenging’.

Figure 22. Challenge Ratings of Adventure Journeys as Experienced by PALs.

### Q 23A. How Many Gaisce Adventure Journeys have PALs Participated in?

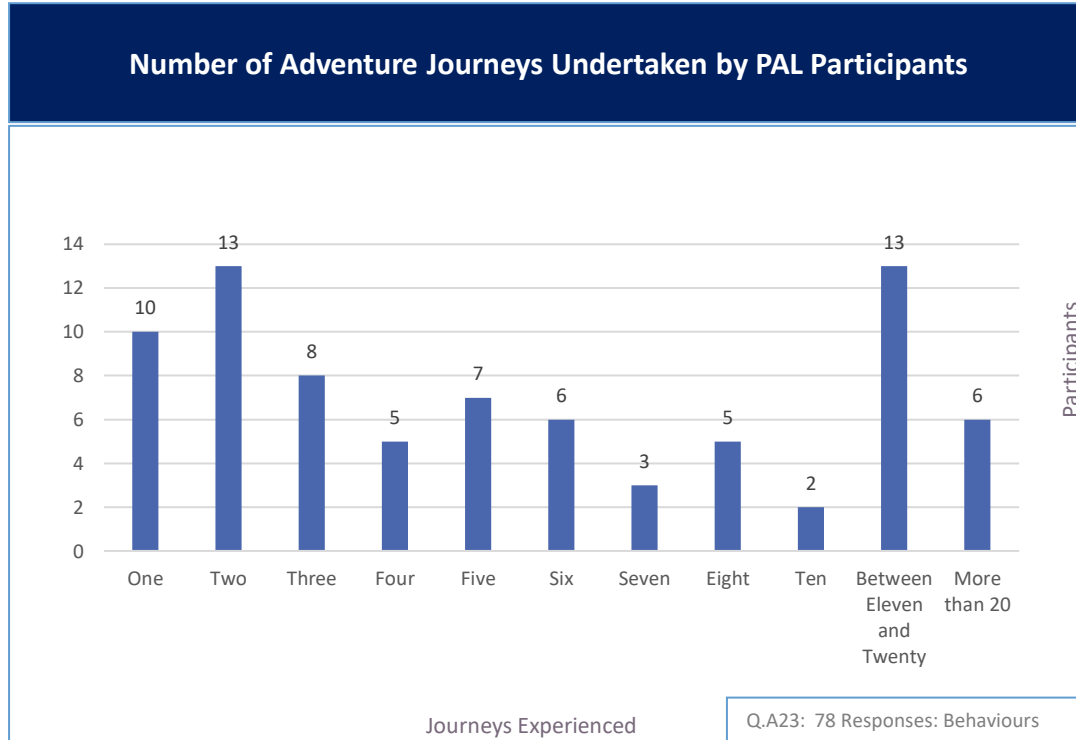


Figure 23. Number of Adventure Journeys Undertaken by PAL Participants.

Overall, 70% of Gaisce PALs reported to having completed three or more Adventure Journeys with their Awardees, while 30% of respondents had completed fewer than two Adventure Journeys. In contrast, 26% of participants had completed more than ten annual Adventure Journeys, which covered a distance in excess of 25 kms per Journey.

## Summary Findings Section A

### The outline below provides a descriptive summary of the key findings of the Gaisce PAL Survey A

- Q.1A: Dublin emerged as the most prevalent county with 29% of the respondents working in this location, while the second, third and fourth highest number of participants lived in Cork, Donegal, and Wexford.
- Q.2A: Experience: 82% have worked in educational establishments for more than 10 years.
- Q.3A: Gaisce School PALs are highly educated – 82% of Participants have a National Framework of Qualifications level nine qualification or higher.
- Q.4A: The survey highlights that 20% of PALs hold a B post or higher school management or leadership role.
- Q.5A: Significantly, 76% of Gaisce PAL Survey participants are over 35 years of age.
- Q.6A: Gender of respondents: 80% the Gaisce PAL survey respondents were female.
- Q.7A: DEIS schools represented in this survey account for 25% of the total cohort of institutions.
- Q.8A: School Gender: 60% of Gaisce PAL survey participants are from mixed schools on the island of Ireland.
- Q.9A: School Size: 74% of Gaisce PAL participants work in schools that have more than 400 students.
- Q.10A: School Gaisce Involvement: 71% of schools have been involved in Gaisce for more than five years.
- Q.11A: Award Programme: 33% of schools offer the Bronze Award, while 64% do not offer Awardee participants the opportunity to progress to the Gold Award.
- Q.12A: 78% of Gaisce PAL participants had no involvement with the Gaisce Awards programme as a young person.
- Q.13A: Significantly, 48% of all PALs have been in their roles for fewer than five years, while 30% of PALs have more than ten years' experience.

## Summary Findings Section A

- Q.14A: The survey highlighted that 42% of Gaisce School PALs became involved in the Gaisce programme by ‘helping a current PAL or as part of a hand over programme’, while 27% became PALs by developing a new Gaisce programme in their school.
- Q.15A: PAL Support: Currently, 51% of PALs work on the Gaisce programme alone.
- Q.16A: Gaisce school-based PALs manage, on average, 33 Bronze Award participants per academic year. In respondent schools that offer progression to the Silver Award, the average number managed is 15 participants per PAL.
- Q.17A: Gaisce Ceremony: 60% of PALs had not attended an award ceremony organised by Gaisce, with 52% of respondents citing ‘no candidates’ as a reason for non-attendance. A further 41% of respondents had ‘time and commitment issues’.
- Q.18A: Time given to managing the Gaisce programme: 91% of respondents spend less than three hours per week running the programme.
- Q.19A: Extracurricular Volunteering activities are undertaken by 74% of respondent PALs, with 40% of participants spending more than three hours per week volunteering for non-Gaisce voluntary activities.
- Q.20A: Sport volunteering is the most frequently mentioned volunteering activity, accounting for 43% of all Gaisce PAL participant volunteering engagement.
- Q.21A: Adventure Journey Planning: 49% of PALs organise it independently, while 45% use the services of an adventure centre.
- Q.22A: Adventure Journey Physicality Rating: 83% of Gaisce PAL participants rated their Adventure Journey from moderately to gratifyingly challenging.
- Q.23A: Adventure Journey: 70% of PALs had completed three or more Adventure Journeys, while 26% of respondents had completed more than ten Journeys.

# Discussion A

Gaisce PAL Research Theme A  
Characteristics and Behaviours

## **A. Discussion – Prevalent Themes**

Several interesting findings emerged from this research and consequently add further insights for understanding the behaviours and characteristics of a Gaisce school PAL.

### **Gaisce Territory Considerations and Survey Validation**

As stated by Gaisce (2020), there are currently 1,470 Gaisce PALs engaged in the Republic of Ireland. Accordingly, Irish school-based PALs represent 76% of all Irish PALs and implement the Gaisce programme in 93% of secondary schools in Ireland (Gaisce, 2020). According to the Department of Education and Skills (2019), there are 371,500 secondary students in 723 schools across Ireland. Of significance, Survey A respondents' school size totalled 50,200 pupils, which represents 13.5% of the Irish school population. As a result, this quantitative Survey A is of pertinent relevance and has validated O'Leary's (2005) minimal statistical analysis requirement of thirty responders.

### **Understanding PAL Teacher Progression**

Notably, 78% of Gaisce PAL participants had no involvement in the Gaisce Awards Programme as a young person. Consequently, while legacy is not currently perceived as a motivation for enrolment as a Gaisce PAL, it is important to develop an understanding of volunteering and the motivations for volunteering. As such, Survey A findings (see Fig. 13) have revealed that 69% of PALs enrolled as Gaisce PALs by 'helping a current PAL' or out of a desire 'to develop a new Gaisce programme in their school'. Further analysis (see Fig. 17) also highlights that, while PALs spend less than three hours per week implementing Gaisce, there is a strong voluntary ethos at the forefront, with 40% of Gaisce PALs gifting more than three hours of their time each week – volunteering with the external non-curricular community, education, charity, environmental, or sport organisations.

Silke et al. (2019, p.43) state that 'mentor motivation for participating in the programme may influence programme success' and as such 'it is of importance for researchers and practitioners to be aware of mentor's motivations for volunteering'. This view is supported by Clary, Snyder et al. (1998), who advocate that volunteer enrolment, retention, and satisfaction are linked to the ability of the volunteer experience to meet their motives. Moreover, the authors identify six motivational functions associated with volunteering: values, understanding, career, social, enhancement, and protective.

### **Gaisce PAL Service Length and Volunteer Identity**

Another major finding of this research is the apparent connection between length of educational service and length of Gaisce service by school-based PAL practitioners. Notably, 82% of PAL respondents have more than ten years' educational experience, while 52% of respondents have in excess of ten years' experience running the Gaisce programme in their schools. Additionally, a willingness by the PALs to continually volunteer and assist in programme activities is also demonstrated (see Fig. 23) by the fact that 70% of Gaisce PAL participants have completed three or more 25km Adventure Journeys, while 26% of respondents have completed more than ten such journeys.

Figure 15 illustrates further commitment to the programme, demonstrating how 51% of participants indicated that they currently implement the Gaisce programme alone. Such commitment is congruent with Finkenstein et al.'s (2005) findings that revealed the correlation between volunteer role identity and perceived volunteer expectations with long-term and committed volunteering. Therefore, as suggested by Finkenstein et al., the implementation by volunteer-dependent agencies of 'strategies that facilitate the development of a volunteer identity and the social pressures that maintain both this and the volunteer' (2005, p. 416) is worthy of further consideration.

### **PAL Age and Psychosocial Development**

Another significant finding from the investigation relates to the age of Gaisce School PALs, with the identification (see Fig. 5) that more than 76% of Gaisce PAL respondents are over 35 years of age. Of further consequence (see Fig 16), PALs currently mentor and support an average of 33 Bronze Award participants each year. In this context, Stevens (1995) puts forward a compelling observation that professional teachers who provide mentorship to others are atypical of those having reached the adult stage of personal development, and, as such, experience generative responsibility driven by the desire to help and support others.

Results of this PAL survey also indicate that 41% of Gaisce PAL participants have reached 45 years of age, which, as contextualised by Erikson (1950) represents the seventh stage of psychosocial development – Generativity vs Stagnation. As observed by Barnett (1984), serving as a mentor may thus satisfy the inborn desire for generativity. This is defined by Erikson as a later-life development phase, with resulting levels of satisfaction experienced by the mentor in the areas of development, growth, and culmination or accomplishments for the mentee.

### **PAL Gender Characteristics and Safeguarding**

Another noteworthy finding from the current research is that 80% of the Gaisce PAL survey respondents were female. While Gaisce do not record PALs by gender (Gaisce, 2020), such findings are consistent with research results from the Department of Education and Skills (2019) who found that 70% of national secondary school teachers in Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools are female.

It is important to note that 20% of PAL survey respondents were male, which is lower than the national male teacher demographic of 30%. This warrants further investigation into the causal low rates of PAL male engagement in the Gaisce programme. As Silke et al. (2019 p.44) explained in *Relational Dynamics in Youth Mentoring Study*, ‘four out of five male volunteers said they were concerned about the possibility of the potential for a child abuse allegation to be made or for their motives for getting involved in the programme to be questioned’.

The issue of child protection concerns as a causal difficulty with the enrolment of male mentors in youth mentoring programmes was further explored by Miller (2007), who identified that the ability of programmes to overcome these concerns is critical to their ability to enrol mentors for young males. The challenge of safeguarding the programme’s Adventure Journey was highlighted by a number of PAL respondents.

### **PAL Educational Achievement and Leadership Engagement**

Results from the survey indicate that 82% of the participants have a National Framework of Qualifications level nine qualification or higher. As such, the relevance of educational attainment in the dynamics of mentoring relationships has been observed by Yavas and Riecken (1985), who found that those who donate the gift of time to educational institutions and programmes are more likely to have a higher level of education and have greater incomes than non-donors.

This view is supported by Bowie et al. (2006), who emphasised that mentorship and youth development programmes benefit from those who have higher levels of formal education, as well as training for that particular programme. Additionally, Bullough further maintains that mentor identities are effectively subsumed under teacher identities as ‘teachers do what they know and mentor as they teach’ (2005, p. 153).

This survey also highlights that 20% of PALs hold a B Post or a higher school leadership role. This finding is of particular relevance as, in their analysis of exemplar youth mentoring programmes, Bowie et al. suggested that leadership and organisational capacity correlates to the ability of programmes to deliver quality services effectively, including, ‘strength of management, soundness of finances and a commitment to ongoing improvement, among others as a measure of performance and capacity’ (2006, p. 79).

### **PAL Relationship Dynamics: Gaisce PAL Busyness**

In addition to these significant findings, one theme that warrants further attention and discussion was observed throughout the findings of this Gaisce Participant Survey. As illustrated, this study has shown that 51% of PAL respondents work alone (see Fig. 15) and manage an average of 33 Bronze Award participants (see Fig. 16), while 91% spend less than 180 minutes per week managing and implementing Gaisce programme activities in their respective schools (see Fig. 18).

Consequently, further analysis demonstrates that these behaviours result in the average mentor/mentee relationship being less than six minutes per week. Silke et al. observe that ‘there is a consensus in the mentoring literature that frequency and consistency of contact, as well as length of youth-mentor meetings, are important’ (2019, p. 44).

This view is also supported by Bowers et al., whose findings ‘provide support for the effect of mentoring relationships that are closer and longer in duration’ (2015, p. 133). Furthermore, 41% of Gaisce PAL respondents were unable to attend a ceremony organised by Gaisce due to ‘time or other commitments’ (see Fig. 17).

One of the central challenges identified by Gaisce PALs in this research relates to teachers having time to meet with students in the context of their busy lives and the often-hectic lives of secondary school students. As observed in this report, ‘busyness of a teacher PAL’s school life’ is a recurring theme in both Survey A and B and is subject to further analysis (see Section D).

### **Summary – PAL Characteristics and Behaviours**

A summary of the key findings for the quantitative factual data gathered from 29 closed-ended questions of Survey A was presented. The findings were structured around one central theme: *The Characteristics and Behaviours of PALs*. This theme examined the demographic profile of the respondents, the length of their educational service, the type and characteristics of their educational environs and the nature of their programme responsibilities. It also outlined their time and volunteering commitments to the Gaisce programme as currently experienced. In Section 4.3, key quantitative findings warranting further analysis were presented.

Of significance, as outlined in Section 4.2, the survey respondents’ combined school pupil size represented 13.5% of the total Irish school population. Key findings from the survey revealed that 80% of PAL participants are female; 69% of Gaisce PALs enrolled in the programme ‘to help a current PAL’ or ‘start a new Gaisce programme’; 82% of PALs had more than ten years’ educational work experience; 70% of PALs had completed three or more Adventure Journeys; 76% of Gaisce PALs are over 35 years of age; 51% of PALs work alone and 91% of PALs spend less than three hours per week working on the Gaisce programme.

While the central theme of *Busyness of a Teacher’s Life* is at the forefront, so too is the evidence that demonstrates a strong commitment by teachers to the Gaisce programme, with 52% of Gaisce PAL participants being involved with the Gaisce programme for more than ten years.

# Results

## Section B

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### Gaisce PAL Research Theme

- **Role Conceptualisation**
- **Role Fulfillment**
- **Making a Difference**
- **Being Valued**
- **Motivational Reasoning**
- **Discussion**



Section B

## Q 1B. How do PALs Conceptualise Their Roles as PALs?

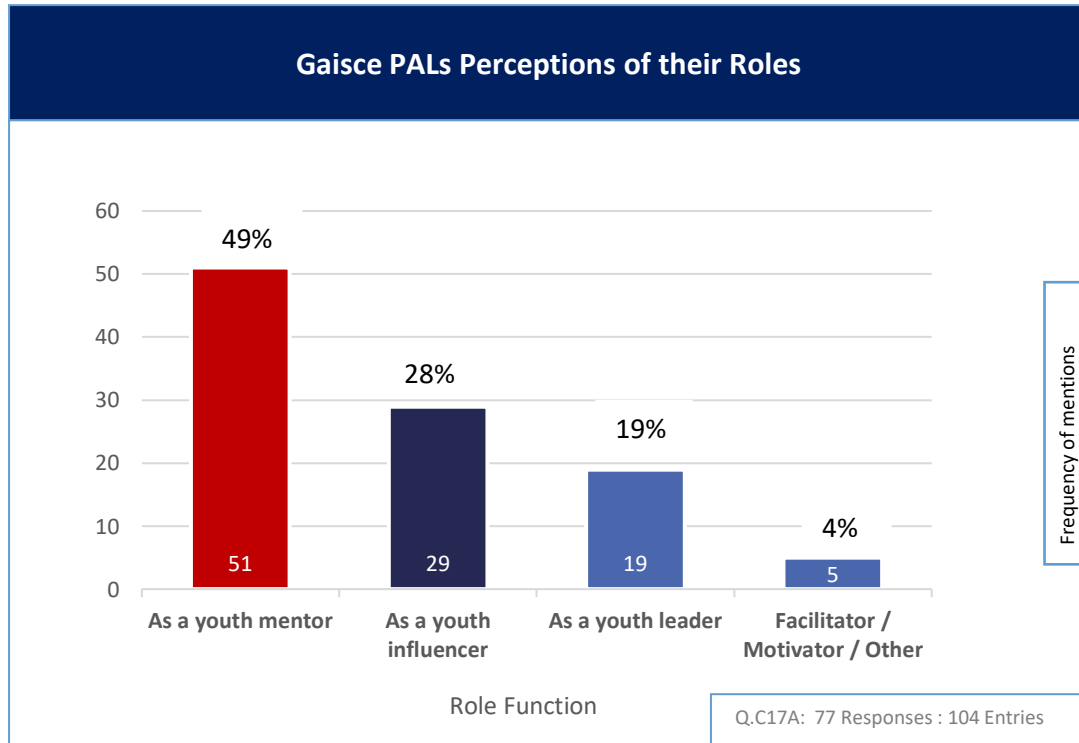


Figure 24. PAL Participants' Perceptions of Their Role and Influence.

Of significance, 49% of PAL Teacher Survey A respondents classified their role as a youth mentor, while 28% of respondents classified their role as a youth influencer. When combined, 77% of all respondents conceptualised their role as either that of mentoring or of youth influencing. Other responses included:

*Yeah, yeah, I do. I mean, I think that not so much what I do, but I think more what the Gaisce programme does for young people. I mean, I wouldn't you know, it's not about... I'm there to guide them and to help them and to kind of encourage them and, you know, keep them going through the programme and, you know, to motivate them more.*

Interviewee No 1

*One hundred per cent and that's coming from kids who have gone on to do Gold, especially like I had eighteen do Gold last year. Eighteen like do it. I still have, this would have been my third group of Sixth Years that have tried to do Gold.*

Interviewee No 2

### Section B

## Q 2B. Do Gaisce PALs Find Their Roles Fulfilling?

Many of the Gaisce PALs spoke about the enjoyment and satisfaction they derived from being a Gaisce PAL and how the role of a PAL has met, and continues to meet, and surpass their normative expectations as a teacher volunteer.

*It does. I would actually say that it has exceeded my expectations of what the role...I didn't really know when I... with many things when you take things on, you don't maybe fully realise what it entails, but it has been and continues to be a very enjoyable experience, and I would say it has exceeded my expectations of what the role would be.*

Interviewee No 1

*It's exceeded, it's exceeded... it's the reason I keep doing it. . I felt that could get more for the kids and it used to be only for TY Bronze but now I've taken it on and gotten people to Silver and now Gold. So, I think I've over-achieved from what I first thought it was going to be.*

Interviewee No 2

*Yes completely, it totally has, it's a really fulfilling thing. Like, I really like, we've built it into our school awards in October, so our annual school awards are in October so all our Gaisce kids get their awards at that school award. And what's really nice is that, like, a lot of the kids who are getting a Bronze Awards would probably never get to go to the school awards if they weren't getting a Gaisce Award. So, like, yes, it's very fulfilling. The role is really great and it's really nice particularly when you've been doing it for as long as I have(laughs).*

PAL No 3

*Yes, it does, no, it does, it's very nice. What we did this year with the reboot was that two years hadn't been presented. So we finally got to present medals for the Fifth Years and Sixth Years and they were very grateful of it, like, you know. Parents were very grateful of it, you know. So, when you kind of see that and you see the fruit blooming from the tree, you know, that's what puts a smile on any teacher's face that's worth their salt, you know?*

PAL No 6

*Yes, I do find my role fulfilling. It's actually it's, it's just easy to keep on top of and I don't know if that's because I've been doing it for six years now, you know, I just, I know the kind of the ins and outs and the ups and downs of it. But has it met my expectations? It has completely exceeded my expectations, being in Gaisce.*

PAL No 8

### Q 3B. Do PALs make a difference to the lives of Gaisce participants?

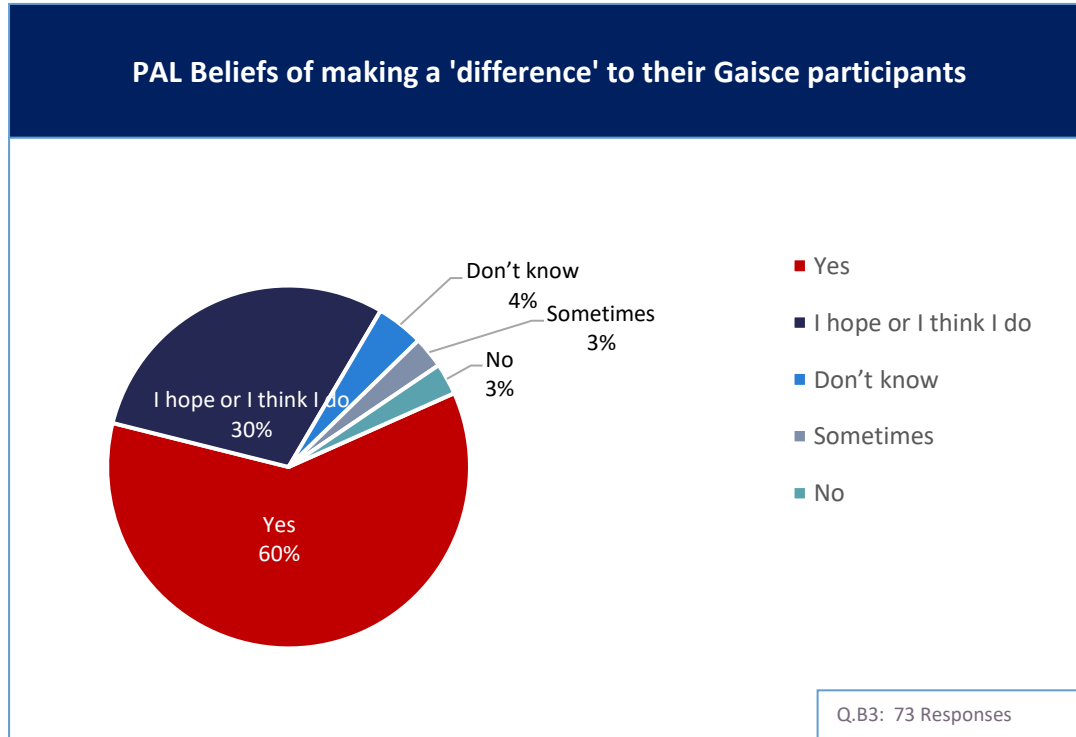


Figure 25. PAL Respondents' Conceptualisation of their Role and Influence on Participants

Of significance, in Survey A 90% of Gaisce PALs replied positively, with 60% of the participants confirming their 'yes' beliefs. Four respondents were 'not sure', while one respondent replied negatively. Affirmative responses for Survey A include:

*Yes, because I can help them decide on areas to work on and encourage them to continue.*

Interviewee No 47

*I definitely do, but the students may see me as a pest who chases them week in/week out for 'stuff.' It usually ends well, and it is easy to see the growth and maturity when they complete it.*

Interviewee No 72

*Yes, purely as a safety net to say, 'Yes, go challenge yourself... I'll be here.' To motivate and help them discover how strong and determined they are.*

Interviewee No 5

## Q 4B. Are Gaisce PALs Valued?

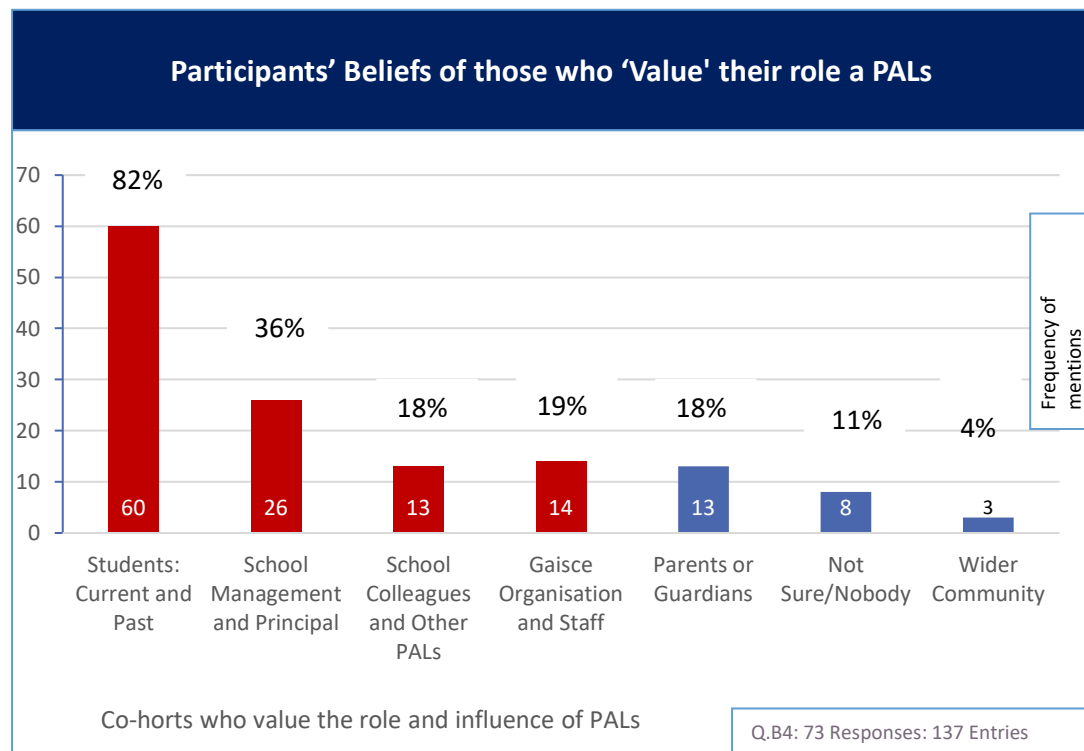


Figure 26. PAL Survey Participants' Observations of Those Who Value Their Role.

Results to this open-ended question, as indicated above, revealed that 82% of participants believed their role as Gaisce PALs was valued, predominantly by students. Furthermore, 36% professed that school management or a school principal also valued their role, while 19% felt they were 'valued' by the Gaisce organisation and staff.

*The participants, yes, one hundred percent. And did you love us? They buy into us. They're always very thankful and, do you know, they do enjoy it and they're grateful that someone's willing to do that with them*

Interviewee No 8

*...from Gaisce themselves, they are, in fairness, they are like, if it's a Christmas Card, if it's the award ceremonies, they always have a 'Thank You' sent to you and anything like that. So, yes, they do, or even an email from one of the guys - Niall who constantly emails you to see how you are getting on, even that, shows you are appreciated.*

Interviewee No 2

*Students and the school.*

Interviewee No 28

## Q 5B. Should Gaisce PALs be Recognised or Rewarded?



Figure 27. PAL Receiving Civic Merit Award Farmleigh 2020

The results of Survey B demonstrated that the respondents were unified in their approach, with a singular consensus that the role of a PAL should not be rewarded. Furthermore, four respondents professed that their PAL role was recognised by Gaisce's Civic Merit Award, which rewarded participants with five years PAL experience for their length of service to the Gaisce Programme.

*I do feel it is recognised, rewarded, if you mean in some sort of financial way, I would say no, because it's a voluntary, you know, it's a voluntary activity, it's an extracurricular activity, I don't feel that it should be rewarded in that sense.*

Interviewee No 1

*I'm not a teacher for recognition or rewards. I'm not a PAL for recognition or reward. I don't think anyone who goes in to be a PAL, you know, or puts themselves forward does it to be recognised or rewarded....So, like, I don't need anything for that, just them doing it and achieving it is reward enough, you know.*

Interviewee No 3

*But I do see it more as a voluntary thing, like, you know, I think anybody who's involved in anything like that no matter what sort of community or voluntary work, the reward is coming from inside, it's intrinsic.*

Interviewee No 28

Q.B4: 73 Responses: 137 Entries

Section B : PAL Role Conceptualisation  
Making A Difference and Motivations

## Q 6B. What Motivated PALs to Become Involved in Gaisce?

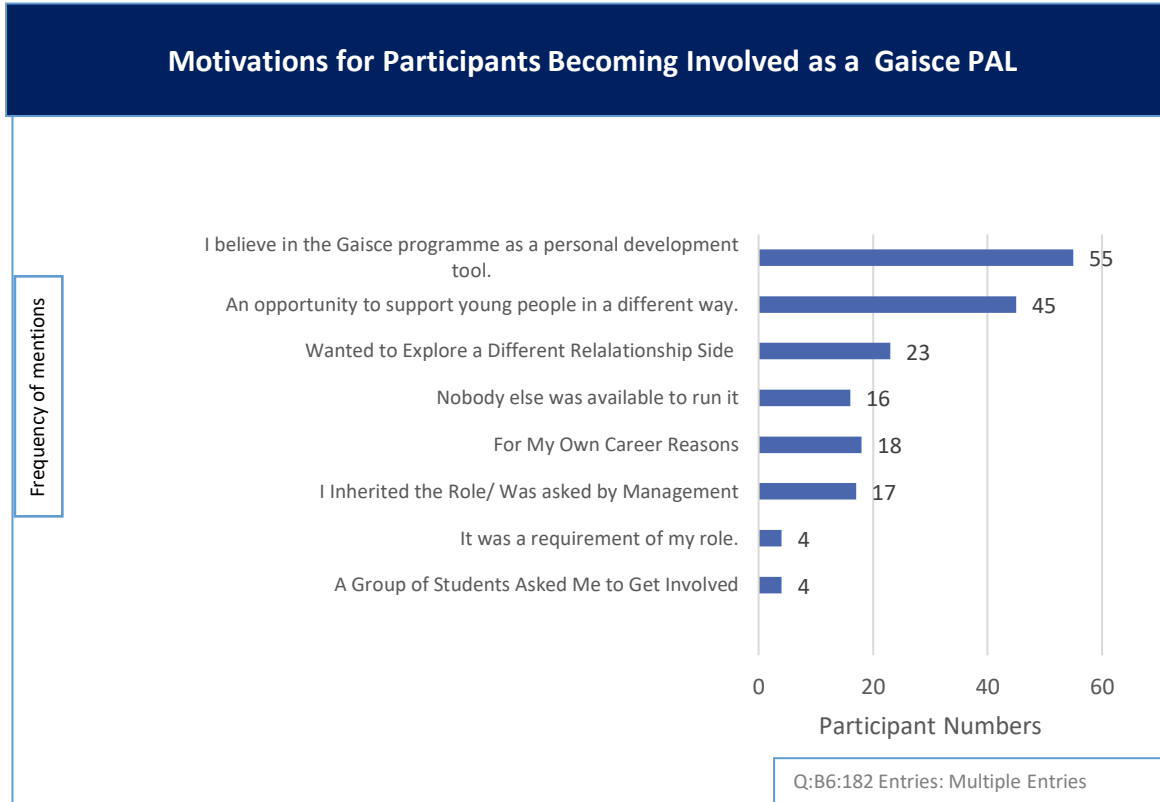


Figure 28. Motivations of PAL Participants to Get Involved with the Gaisce Programme.

37% of PAL entries expressed a motivation for Gaisce involvement was the opportunity afforded by the programme experience a relationship with students in a different way. 40% of respondents expressed that they were either motivated to join Gaisce as they perceived it as a personal development tool or they joined to advance career prospects.

Of further significance, 40% of respondents expressed that they were either motivated to join Gaisce as they perceived it as a personal development tool or they joined to advance career prospects.

Of relevance, 18% of respondents joined as PALs as they either inherited the position or there was nobody else in their organisation to run Gaisce.

## Q.6B: Understanding PAL Teacher Motivation

*I suppose it's why you become a teacher, but it's also why, you know, it's also why you become a PAL because you want to help them become the best kind of, you know, human beings and learn as much as they can as they are. They're going to school or they're going through a programme like Gaisce.*

Interviewee No 3

*I really enjoy encouraging young people to set goals for themselves and to achieve them, but also, just, I think it's a very worthwhile programme for young people to be involved in, to get them out into the community, to see the world beyond school and just simply to kind of see that they are more than capable of being able to do things. And to achieve things in order to kind of improve themselves and their lives.*

Interviewee No 5

## B.6: Understanding PAL Teacher Motivation

*I enjoy doing the programme, I see the value and the benefits of the programme. I think the participants also enjoy the programme and then sometimes they only maybe see the value of the programme at the end of the programme, in some cases. Other students you know, some are really into it and are very keen and very enthusiastic and others kind of go along with it but maybe don't see all the pieces fitting together until the very end, if that makes sense?*

Interviewee No 1

*But the main reason I keep involved ism it creates a great buzz in the school. And the kids love doing it and they do take great pride when they actually achieve their award. Like this year, we finished before we got to do our Adventure Journey and the kids weren't bothering emailing me for work or to see, you know, how do I get in online. The question was, 'How are we going to get our Gaisce?'*

Interviewee No 8

## Q 7B. What Motivates PALs to Continue to Remain Involved as a Gaisce PAL?

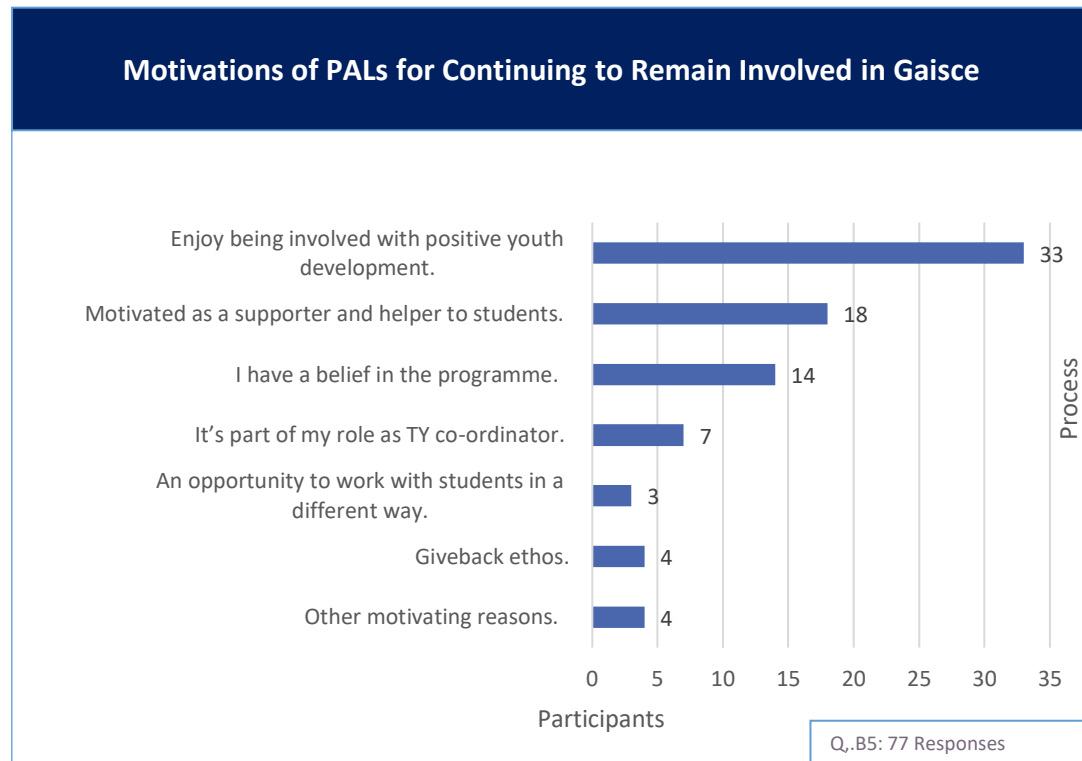


Figure 27. Motivations of PAL Participants to Remain Involved in the Gaisce Programme.

These results show that 42% of the respondents felt motivated to continue in their roles as they derived enjoyment and satisfaction from being involved with positive youth development.

*I love to see students overcome hurdles or barriers, grow into independent young adults, [and] gain from experiences as opposed to just doing them.*

Interviewee No 23

*I enjoy encouraging the participants throughout the year and seeing their satisfaction on award night - sometimes it is the only medal they get - and their self-esteem is clearly seen.*

Interviewee No 72

*[I] enjoy working with students and love when students become engaged with the programme and really enjoy it.*

Interviewee No 62

# Discussion B

Gaisce PAL Research Theme  
Mentor Identity, Role  
Conceptualisation and Making a  
Difference

## **B. Discussion – Prevalent Themes**

Several interesting findings emerged from this research and consequently add further insights for understanding the role conceptualisation, making a difference, feeling valued and motivational reasoning of a Gaisce school PAL.

Section B : PAL Role Conceptualisation  
Making A Difference and Motivations

## Discussion: Section B – PAL Conceptualisation of Role Prevalent Themes

### Section B: Summary Findings: Conceptualisation of Roles

The outline below provides a descriptive summary of the key qualitative findings of Gaisce PAL Survey A (online) and Survey B (audio interviews).

Of significance, 49% of PAL Survey A respondents perceived the role of a PAL primarily as one of a youth mentor, while a further 28% of participants categorised their role as a youth influencer. When combined, 77% of respondents conceptualised their PAL role as one of ‘mentorship or influencer of youth’ (Q. C17A).

Respondents identified two dominant factors influencing the conceptualisation of their role as a PAL. First was the prominence given to the mentorship functional role of a PAL, while the second pertinent theme was that the role of a Gaisce PAL was one of a multi-faceted identity, which dynamically changes within contextual daily situations. These continuous and everchanging trajectories encompassed the role of being a youth mentor, youth leader, facilitator, administrator, supporter and motivator (Q. C17B).

In their roles as volunteer PALs, high levels of satisfaction, enjoyment and a sense of personal fulfilment was reported by all interviewees. Of further interest, four PALs accepted that the role of a PAL had exceeded their expectations (Q. D22B).

Amongst both sample PAL groups there was a unified response by the respondents of having made a difference in the lives of their Award participants. As illustrated in Figure 25, 90% of the respondents in Survey A and 100% in Survey B professed to making a difference while exemplifying and demonstrating their experiences of the influence they had on the lives of their programme participants. The narratives of youth encouragement, motivation, helping, supporting, facilitating and helping to build youth resilience were at the forefront (Q. C19A and Q. C19B).

The majority of PALs believed that they were valued for the work they did in the programme. While 82% of Survey A respondents felt valued by students, 54% reported that they were valued by school management and co-workers. All ten of the Survey B respondents professed to being valued by their students, while respondents of both Survey A and B reported high levels of perceived mentor support from Gaisce (Q. D24A and Q. D24B).

## Discussion: Section B – PAL Conceptualisation of Role Prevalent Themes

### Section B: Summary Findings: Conceptualisation of Roles

Participants were unified in their beliefs that the role of a PAL did not warrant further reward or recognition above the current perceived levels. Four respondents cited their receipt of a Civil Merit Award from Gaisce, which they perceived as being enough of a reward for their endeavours (Q. D25B).

Significantly, 42% of the respondents felt motivated to continue in their role as PALs, citing that they enjoyed being involved with the positive youth development from the programme.

Eighteen respondents indicated their motivation was propelled by a desire to support and help youth participants, while fourteen Gaisce PALs highlighted that a further desire to continue in the role of a PAL was fuelled by a ‘belief in the Gaisce’ programme and the ‘integrity of the Award Programme’ (Q. B15A and Q. B15A).

Key qualitative findings that warrant future analysis were presented. Of significance, the majority of Gaisce PALs – 77% of the total survey respondents – conceptualised their PAL role of as one of ‘mentorship or influencer of youth’.

Of consequence, the study has revealed that the identity of a PAL is framed in a mentorship functional role that is multi-faceted and dynamically changes within the context of place, time and relationship objectives.

It is clear from this study that Gaisce PALs enjoy high levels of satisfaction and personal fulfilment, resulting in an expressed desire to remain in their respective roles as youth mentors and influencers.

It is also clear from this research that PALs perceive that they make a difference in the lives of their programme participants, and therefore, feel valued in the work they do, mainly by students, school management, colleagues and the Gaisce organisation.

This study has also revealed a consensus that PALs – in their roles as volunteers – do not believe they warrant further recognition or reward for their continued endeavours. Meanwhile, the majority of PAL respondents expressed a desire to continue in their roles as they enjoyed being involved with a positive youth development programme.

Section B : PAL Role Conceptualisation  
Making A Difference and Motivations

## Discussion: Section B – PAL Conceptualisation of Role Prevalent Themes

### Section B: Summary:

Participants were unified in their beliefs that the role of a PAL did not warrant further reward or recognition above the current perceived levels. Four respondents cited their receipt of a Civil Merit Award from Gaisce, which they perceived as being enough of a reward for their endeavours (Q. D25B).

Significantly, 42% of the respondents felt motivated to continue in their role as PALs, citing that they enjoyed being involved with the positive youth development from the programme. Eighteen respondents indicated their motivation was propelled by a desire to support and help youth participants, while fourteen Gaisce PALs highlighted that a further desire to continue in the role of a PAL was fuelled by a ‘belief in the Gaisce’ programme and the ‘integrity of the Award Programme’ (Q. B15A and Q. B15A).

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This study has also revealed a consensus that PALs – in their roles as volunteers – do not believe they warrant further recognition or reward for their continued endeavours. Meanwhile, the majority of PAL respondents expressed a desire to continue in their roles as they enjoyed being involved with a positive youth development programme, which was deemed to be a programme of integrity and worth. Furthermore, PALs values of trust, and their motivational and philosophical beliefs as teachers were evidenced, with the narratives of helping, supporting, facilitating, encouraging and motivating their Award participants at the forefront.

Section B : PAL Role Conceptualisation  
Making A Difference and Motivations

# Results

## Section C

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### Gaisce PAL Research Theme

- **Benefits of Being a PAL**
- **Challenges of Being a PAL**



## Q 1C. What do PALs Enjoy Most about Being a Gaisce PAL?

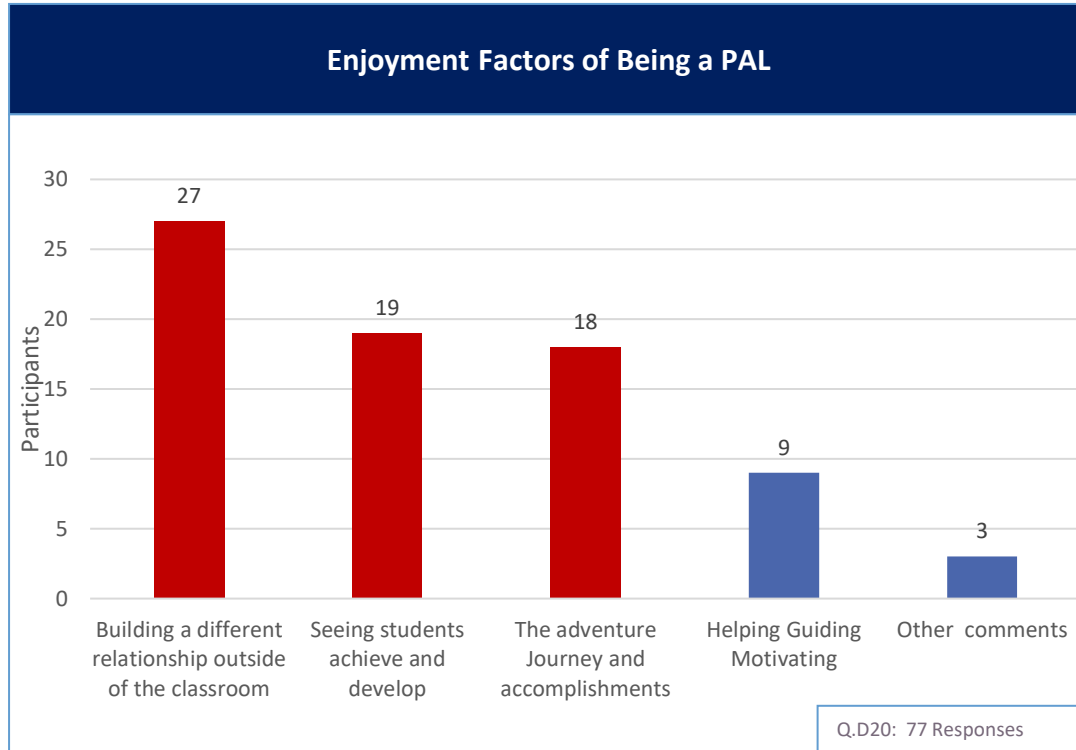


Figure 29. PAL Survey Participants' Enjoyment Aspects of Being a Gaisce PAL.

### Responses: Helping/guiding/motivating.

14 Being able to guide students and help students. It is rewarding to help [them] on their journey.

### Responses: A different relationship outside the classroom.

80 Working and being with young people and the friendship of Gaisce PALs.

### Responses: Seeing students achieve and develop.

53 The chance to be part of promoting and validating student growth outside the classroom.

### Responses: The Adventure Journey and accomplishment.

50 The Adventure Journey is always so fab. Students really build rapport with their peers and staff, and it is always wonderful to see student enjoying the outdoors

## Q 1C. What Do You Enjoy Most About Being a PAL?

1 “And that's particularly in the Adventure Journey. I love, you know, taking students out to the mountains for a real experience of what it's like to be out in the mountains for students that as some of them say, 'Miss, I wouldn't walk to the shop and back'. So, that's a real challenge, and it's a fun part and it's a real bonding experience for the students as well, going with their class, on the Adventure Journey.”

8 “I love it, I really, really do. And I'm not saying that just because I'm talking to you but it is, it's fantastic. You get to work with the kids, you get to know the kids outside of the classroom because, ultimately, I'm an English teacher and you know them and its structure. But you get to see a different side of the kids running the Gaisce programme. So, like, overall, it's fantastic.

## Answers Exhibits Survey B

7 "It's brilliant. it's like, it's fantastic, it's a very rewarding thing, you know. Like anything, it can be frustrating at times because, you're coming at it from the point of view of age and experience, you're trying to reflect that back to fifteen, sixteen-year olds who don't have that age and experience

3 "The interaction with the kids and seeing them succeed, especially in the cases where you have kids who probably haven't achieved academically or, you know, in sport or things like that, seeing them achieve is probably one of the most enjoyable things.” “And it's an opportunity too as a teacher.

## Q 2C. How is Gaisce a Benefit PALs and Others?

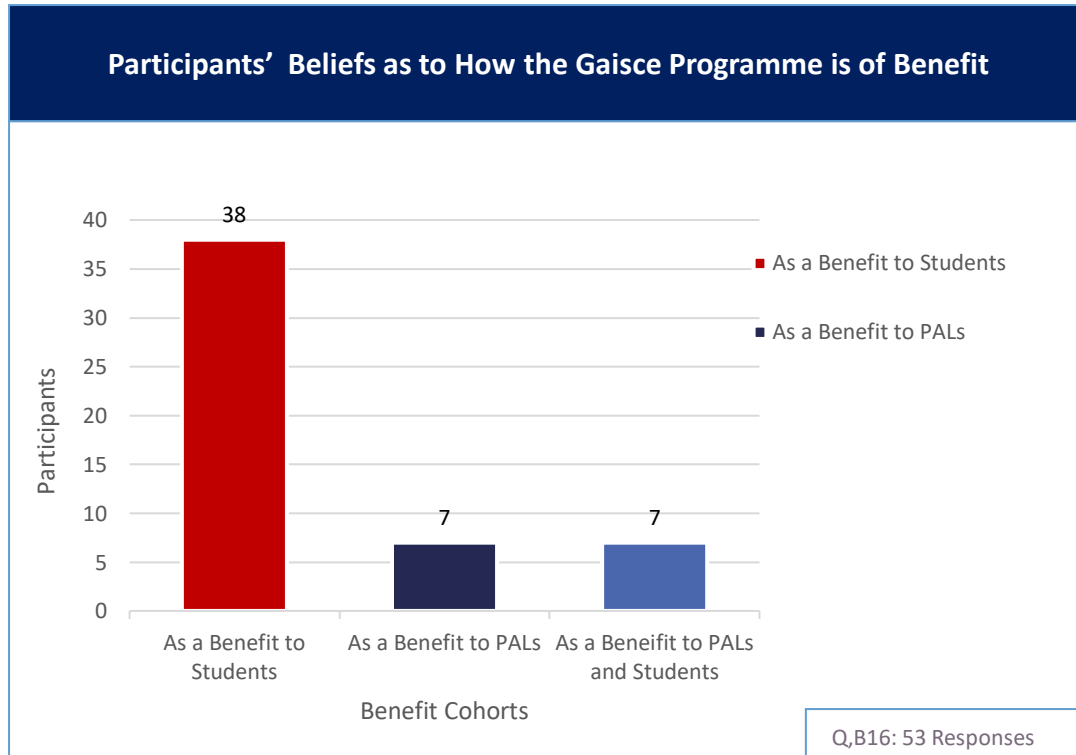


Figure 30. PAL Participants' Beliefs as to How the Gaisce Programme is of Benefit.

### Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits PALs.

19 [It] reminds me that there is another side to young people outside the classroom.  
 38 I see this as an opportunity to provide leadership in a different capacity to students. It has also pushed me to improve my organisational skills and management skills. It has allowed me to interact with students in a less academic manner and has helped to strengthen my relationships with my students, leading to more respectful interactions with them in the classroom and in the wider school community. It has also helped me to form links with people in the wider community geographically in the area of the school.

### Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits PALs and students.

44 I see the Gaisce programme as a personal development tool for all participants, leaders and learners alike. I see the confidence that participants gain over the duration of their involvement in the programme. I am also involved in water safety, outside school, as a coach and a participant. Any activity where a participant has an opportunity to find his/her niche is worthwhile. Gaisce opens so many doors and possibilities to the participants: meeting new people, volunteering, taking on challenges [and] making commitments. Participants discover their strengths. They begin to appreciate interdependence as well as independence

### Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits students.

11 Students have to take ownership for the four areas within the award. They are guided, but there is no chasing or spoon-feeding, [which] can happen with time restraints within a class setting. The Adventure Journey is a key piece in the puzzle for me, seeing students outside their normal environment and having to guide themselves, make camp and cook shows what students can do when given the opportunities. [...] also, the leadership, where you see often quiet students grow in confidence over the 13 weeks to be able to take control of a group or show initiative, and at times I feel students don't have these opportunities without the Gaisce award

### Q 3C. What are the Challenges Experienced by PALs?

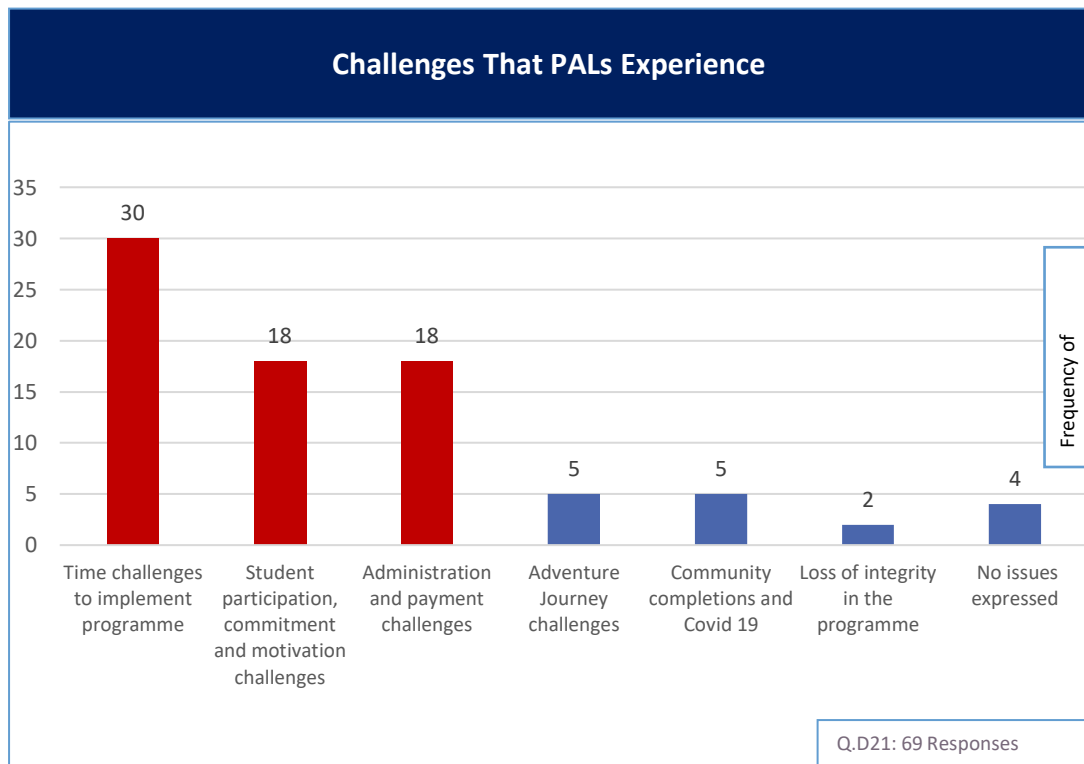


Figure 31. PAL Survey Participants’ Challenges Experienced as a Gaisce PAL.

**Responses: Time challenges and busy school schedules.**

- 1 It is a very busy role, managing such a large group of students and making sure that they are all on track throughout the year.

**Responses: Student participation and motivation challenges.**

- 72. There are always challenges – it is difficult when a student signs up and then starts to ‘drag their feet’ – it can be a challenge if you cannot sign them off at the end of the year

**Responses: Administration and payments challenges.**

- 52 Chasing students to sign off on hours, getting them to update forms properly, [and] having to oversee it all myself.

**Responses: Adventure Journey challenges.**

- 33 I find the Adventure Journey a challenge as I now have big family commitments.

**Responses: Integrity Award challenges.**

- 53 Personally, a lack of cooperation from the other PALs... We have different acceptable standards of completion.
- 67 I find it difficult when some participants try and get the medal when they don’t deserve it. I find the Adventure Journey difficult now as I myself have three children, so the weekend away is difficult

# Results

## Section D

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### Gaisce PAL Research Theme

- Programme Training
- Programme Support
- Programme Covid-19
- Programme Effectiveness
- Programme Observations:



Programme Effectiveness and Training

**Q 1D. Is there One Thing that would Improve a PALs Experience of Delivering Gaisce?**

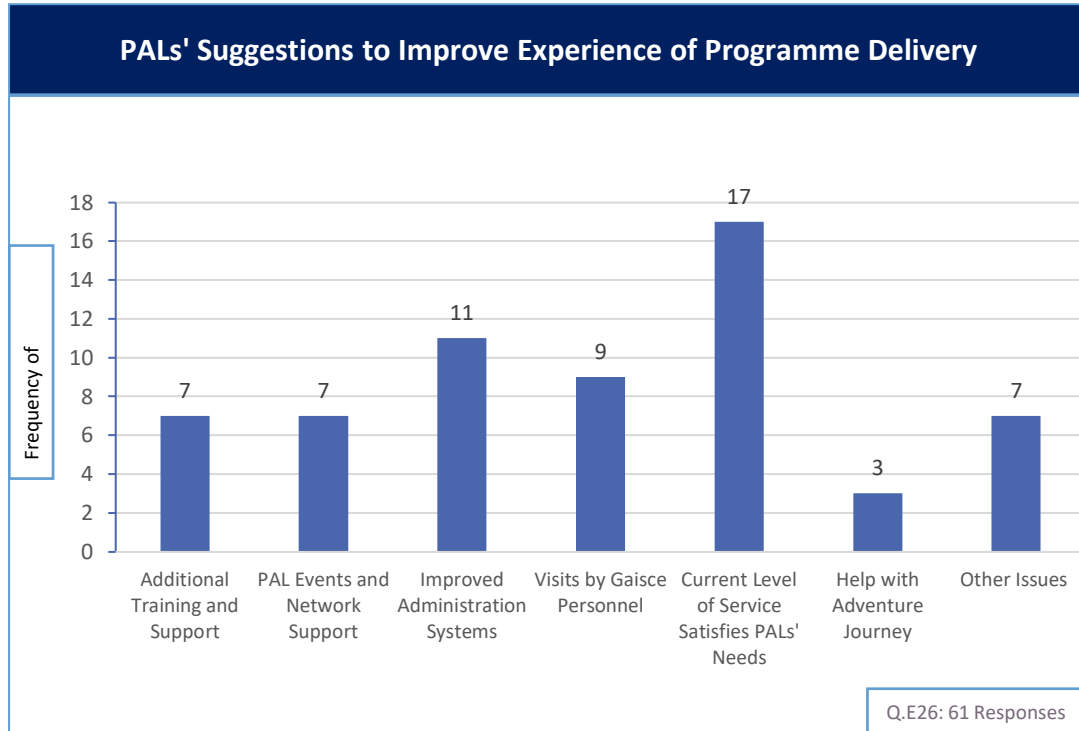


Figure 32. PALs' to Improve Experience of Gaisce Programme Delivery.

**Responses: Improved systems.**

25 I think Gaisce has very good processes and resources in place, and the regional development officer in our area is really proactive and helpful. I think a big area for improvement could be the quality of the online portal diary for students and teachers. I think the interface could be developed to make it quicker, less clunky and more interactive (is there an app developed for diary entries) to promote multimedia reflective of their own experience with smartphones/social media. It would also make the PAL interaction with supervisors/pro-forma gathering easier. I use a programme called Managebac for a subject called CAS for the IB system, and students like it.

29 Making leaders aware of initiatives that are out there, old and new, that they can tap into. As many options as possible within all categories. A brief introduction with a link for detail or contacts. Ideas database with options that are running that year.

48 Guest speakers and contacting participants by email, e.g. newsletters.

51 The booklets were easier to manage than the website.

**Responses: Visits by Gaisce personnel.**

36 Help with initial set-up in school. Speak to students. A fresh voice goes a long way.  
41 I would like [it] if members of the Gaisce team could visit the school at the beginning of the year to motivate the students and maybe do a day or half-day workshop with them. It would be a great support.

48 Guest speakers and contacting participants by email, e.g. newsletters.

68 More frequent personal contact.

**Responses: Adventure Journey help.**

61 Help with organising the trip.

**Q 2D. What Additional Training that would PALs like to be Offered to enhance their Skills as a PAL?**

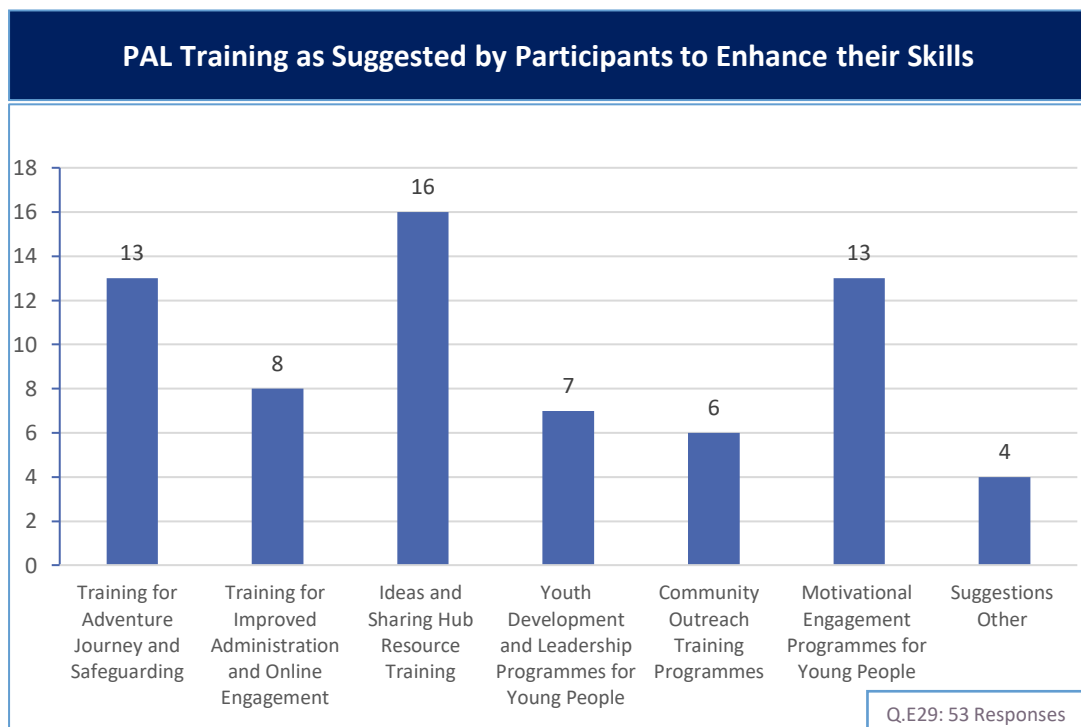


Figure 33. PAL Training Suggested to Further Enhance PAL skills.

**Responses: Training for Adventure Journey and safeguarding.**

- 1 The Adventure Journey.
- 23 Motivation of students; student independent thinking/planning (I firmly believe that many young people need to take more ownership of their Gaisce participation, and there possibly should be some weighting towards it). GDPR re: media/photos and use [and] child protection, especially on the Adventure Journey.
- 32 Organising the Adventure Challenge, health/safety/insurance [and] alternatives to the programme like what has happened with schools being closed.

**Responses: Training for improved administration and online engagement.**

- 8 A refresher course for current PALs, just to brush up on the basics again.
- 25 Managing vetting for students and ethical volunteer processes.  
Using reflection techniques in classroom regarding Gaisce

**Responses: Ideas and sharing hub resource training.**

- 11 Ideas outside the everyday for each of the four sections. Clips from students promoting Gaisce so [that] it is not staff doing this. We do use students who have finished the award, but alternatives would be nice.
- 17 More ideas of areas to do the categories in; DEIS students can't afford to join classes, etc., so I often need to think outside the box. A lot of things happen in the home for them – working outside is not an option.
- 29 A brief view of all the possibilities within each category, just to give ideas, not an in-depth view of any (some just don't work for you or don't suit your situation, and you might have to listen through a talk on it for 15 minutes, and you just zone out).
- 36 Ideas for storing evidence of activities.

**Q 3D. If Gaisce were to offer PAL events, which Type would PALs be most likely to Attend in 2021 and Beyond?**

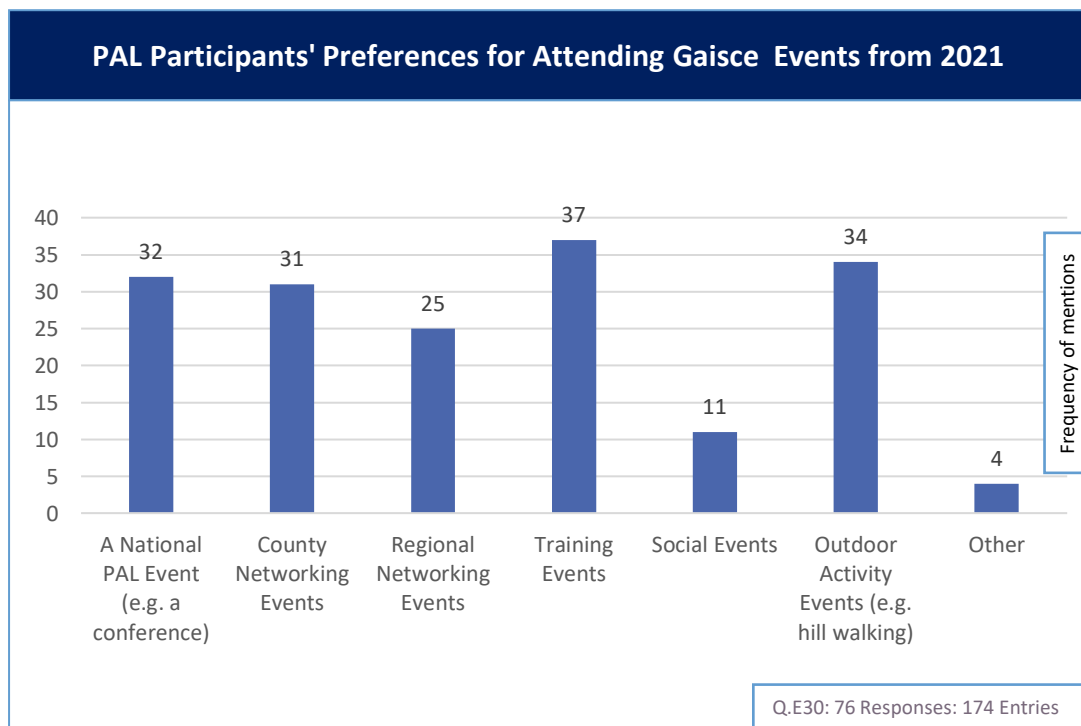


Figure 34. PAL Participants' Preferences for Attending Gaisce Organised Events from 2021.

To be honest with you, the way I am at the moment, this is a personal thing, I have three young kids, social isolation for us is very easy (laughs). I probably wouldn't and I have also just been accepted on a place in a college course so time is limited and, you see, I'm doing it as Gaeilge and it's going to be online.

Interviewee No 6

I think that if online options were to be made available for people who need to get updated on Gaisce or anything like that, I think it works significantly for me it would for me personally. You know, even our spare time is very limited. So, I don't want to be spending my spare time either, like again, I'm very busy Monday to Friday. But don't come near me at the weekend, kind of thing. You know, it's a few days I have to recharge my batteries and I have to be somewhere you know.

Interviewee No 7

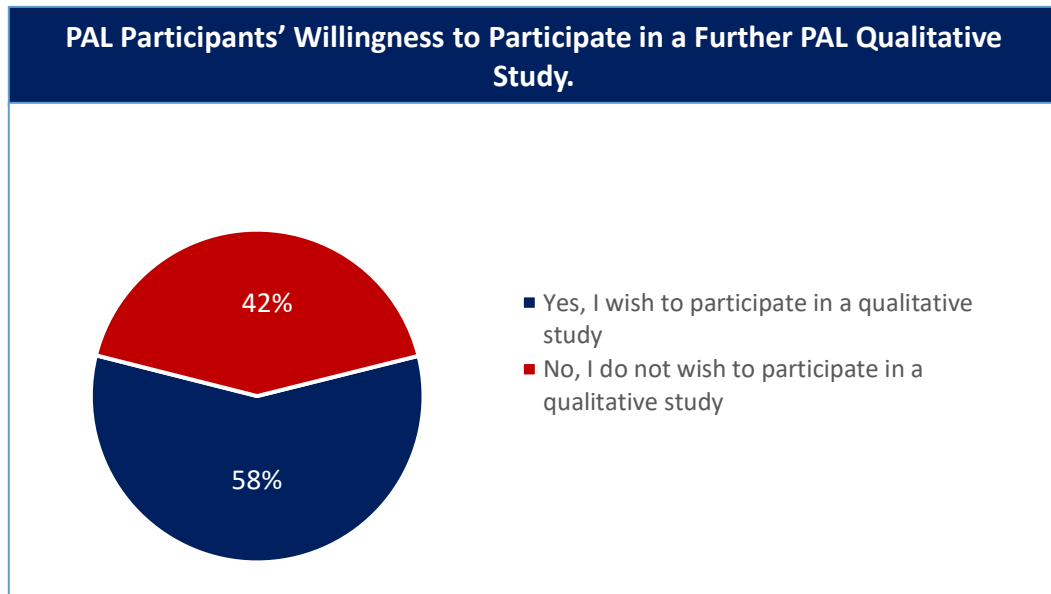
I actually – so, this is going to sound awful – I'm actually... Just, I'm happy volunteering. I'm happy giving my time to the students. I'm not really interested in developing like a peer network or anything with other PALs or anything. I have a couple of PALs that I would contact if I was stuck on something, but I'm happy with that. So, actually with School X and with my job role in The Institute and being pulled in a direction, I've very little free time, you know; I'm very time poor.

Interviewee No 10

Yeah, again, upskilling or refresher courses in PAL training every couple of years, maybe every three or four years would, probably, be something that's very, very helpful. And again, just to make sure that you're your being compliant, you're doing everything that you should and that you're aware of the opportunities out there for people to do.

Interviewee No 5

**Q 4D . As a Gaisce PAL, would you be willing to participate in a qualitative study that seeks to record your experiences and insights as a secondary school Gaisce PAL?**



**Q 5D** Since 22 March, Gaisce has been running ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This campaign encourages participants to continue their Gaisce Award and/or young people to sign up for the Gaisce Award during this time. If you have any insights or observations of ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ on the campaign, please share your experience below:

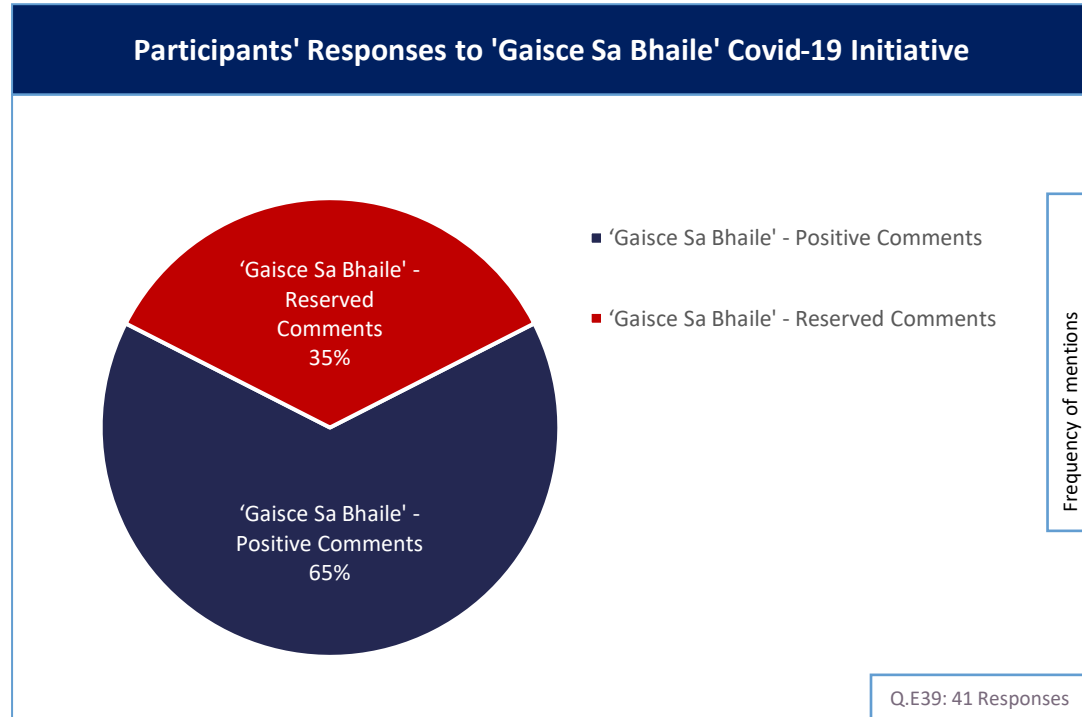


Figure 36. PAL Respondents' Conceptualisation of their Role and Influence on Participants.

- 67 I think it's necessary to allow simpler tasks to be used this year. This is an unprecedented time, and our freedom is completely limited. I'm thrilled that this does not mean my Gaisce participants will have to miss out. But as a general rule, when we are not curbed by the Coronavirus, I feel we need to maintain a high standard. I usually try and push my students. I feel a medal is worthless if you don't feel you earned it.
- 37 It has been so difficult to encourage the students to complete, not through [the] fault of Gaisce or myself, but I find that sending the lads emails to remind them is not as effective as the face-to-face contact. I have 59 students working on Gaisce at the moment. Of those, I was confident that 45 would complete by the end of the school year. At the moment, I only have 16 who completed at home and are currently working on Adventure projects. It's such a shame

## Q 6D. What Barriers do PALs Believe Prevents Participants' Progression to a Silver Award?

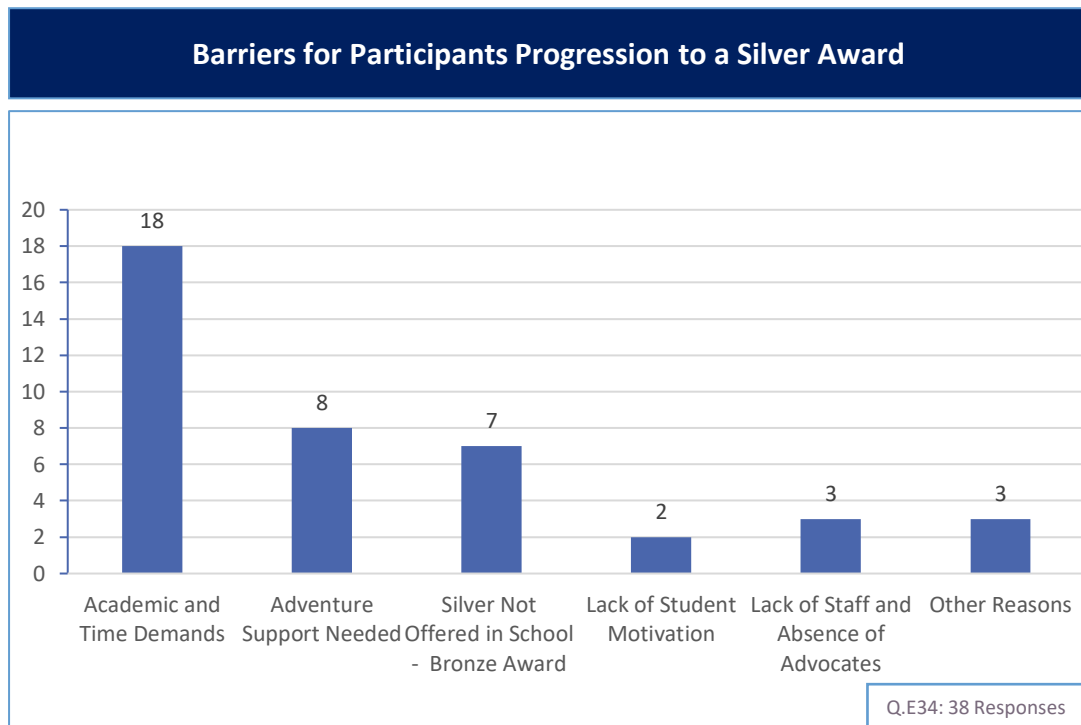


Figure 35. PAL Participants' Stated Barriers for Participant Progression to a Silver Award in Schools.

### Responses: Academic and time demands.

- 6 Exam pressure.  
 20 We focus on TYs; once they hit Fifth Year, they are too busy concentrating on studies to complete Silver.  
 35 Time and volunteers to help PAL facilitate it.  
 43 Finding the time with willing supervisors to go away. It involves two nights, and it is difficult to get people to give up the whole weekend.  
 72 Students believe it may take up too much time at senior cycle, and occasionally the two day hike can prohibit some!

### Responses: Adventure support needed.

- 1 As a PAL, I would require further training in order to enable students to progress to the Silver or Gold Award. Given the litigious society in which we live, I would need to have the ML (Mountain Leader) qualification in order to take students into the mountains.  
 24 Supervision for more than one night is difficult.  
 33 The Adventure Journey being supervised.  
 35 Time and volunteers to help PAL facilitate it

### Responses: New/Not offered in school/Focus on Bronze Award.

- 11 Gaisce is relatively new to KCC, so we want to establish the Bronze Award fully and embed practice and raise profile before venturing into the world of Silver. We would support students who wanted to continue to Silver, but [we] don't advertise this.  
 14 We have offered Silver and Gold and still have some Gold participants. I am only involved with these students and now think that the Silver and Gold may not be available..  
 41 Silver Award is not run in the school.

### Responses: Lack of motivation.

- 18 Time to engage students and a lack of enthusiasm and motivation by students.  
 27 Enthusiasm and registration fee.

## Q 7D. Did PALs have any additional comments?

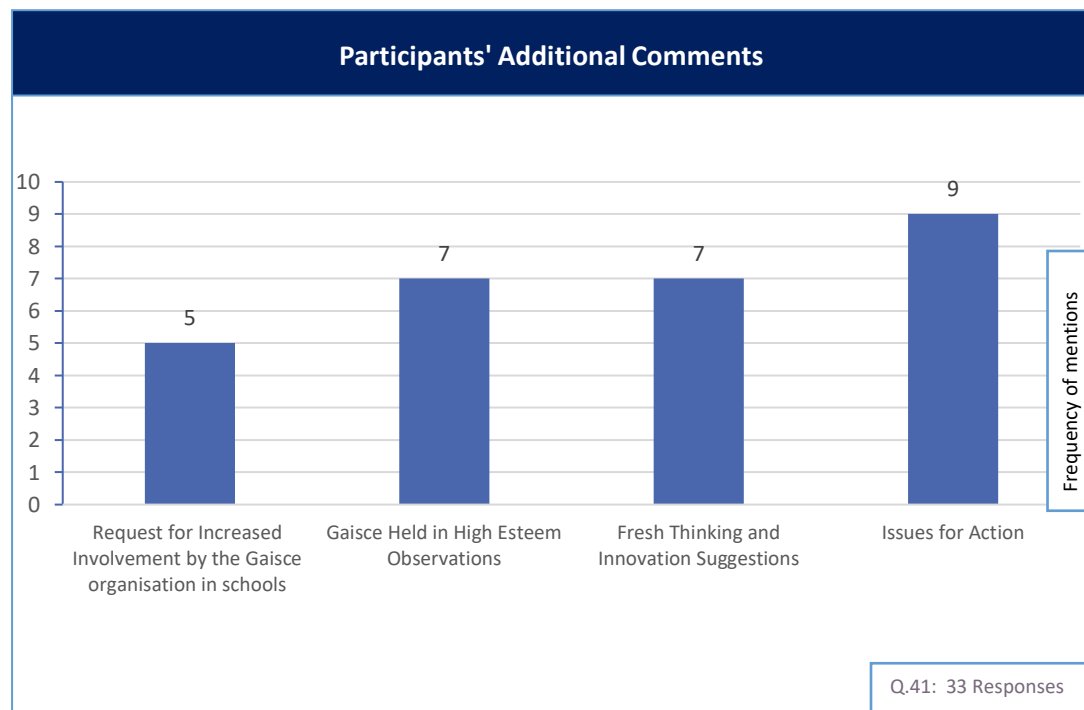


Figure 37. PAL Participants' Additional Survey Comments, May/June 2020.



# Gaisce UCC PAL Research 2020

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## OVERALL CONCLUSION

## 5: Study Findings Summary

Propelled by a cascade of actions, this nine-month investigation ultimately produced a rich and nuanced array of both quantitative and qualitative PAL data. Consequential analysis of this data has empirically demonstrated that 77% of all respondents conceptualised their role as a teacher PAL as either that of mentoring or of youth influencing. Furthermore, Gaisce PALs derived ample fulfilment and enjoyment from their roles, while 82% of participants believed their role as a Gaisce PAL was valued, predominantly by students. Results also indicate that 66% of PAL respondents wished to continue in their roles – motivated by an altruistic desire to remain involved in a positive youth programme by helping and supporting students.

Of significance, 90% of respondents believed they ‘made a difference’ to the lives of their Award students; findings for this study classified ‘making a difference’ as helping, supporting, influencing, empathising, facilitating and motivating their participants. As indicated, it is clear from this strand of investigation that the results from Survey A (online) and Survey B (audio interviews) have conclusively demonstrated that, in their role as Gaisce PALs, teachers perceive that they do attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people, thus validating the stated research hypothesis.

However, within such a research tapestry, while the question of analytical data validation comes to the fore, so too does the presumption of trust in the subjective participant responses to this study. However, as evidenced by Schwartz and McCarthy:

People tap into the energy of the human spirit when their everyday work and activities are consistent with what they value most and with what gives them a sense of meaning and purpose (2007, p. 74).

Consequently, it may be argued that within the normative morals of this study, the participants’ ‘attachment of value’ responses to the perceived role that Gaisce PALs play in mentoring young people’s lives may have been overtly augmented or distorted by such intrinsic beliefs and values that they, as teachers, hold or encapsulate in one absolute belief of ‘what feels ‘good’ and ‘right’ (and ‘bad’)’ (Peterson and O’Flynn, 2007, p. 199), or enshrined in Goodlad et al.’s (1990) contention that teaching is a moral enterprise. Consequently, as best practice recommends (Kelley, 2003), prior to the advocacy of an ultimate decree as to the findings and validation of this study, a summary antithetical critique is proffered.

As the above discourse on the validation mechanics of this study illustrates, and as advocated by Greenop (2011) and Silke et al. (2019), the practice of mentoring will benefit – if we understand more about such processes – from continued research. Therefore, in endeavouring to investigate the practices and policies associated with Gaisce PALs, this research suggests that we may need to reframe our assumptions about PAL teachers and volunteer mentorship

As the above discourse on the validation mechanics of this study illustrates, and as advocated by Greenop (2011) and Silke et al. (2019), the practice of mentoring will benefit – if we understand more about such processes – from continued research. Therefore, in endeavouring to investigate the practices and policies associated with Gaisce PALs, this research suggests that we may need to reframe our assumptions about PAL teachers and volunteer mentorship. Furthermore, this study has recognised that there are three pertinent challenges to participant responses that warrant further discussion. Such a critique, in particular, is contextualised by the interpretation of participant responses to the following questions: *In your role as a PAL, who values you?, How much weekly time do you give to managing Gaisce participants? Do you have any further observations?*

### **5.1: Challenge One: Being Valued: *In your role as a PAL, who values you?***

In the main, 82% of PAL participants professed that they were valued by their students. However, a deeper investigation of survey data revealed a gradation of responses, which highlights that teachers were mostly valued by students who completed the Award programme, and their parents. As such, indicative responses from various interviewees demonstrated this assertion, for example, Interviewee No. 29: ‘Students that follow through with a Goal’; Interviewee No. 30: ‘The students and, if they complete the programme, the parents’; Interviewee No. 73: ‘The conscientious students’; and Interviewee No. 7: ‘The students who are very motivated’. This trend is further confirmed by Gaisce (2020), who found that for the period 2018/2019, the national attrition level from those who registered to those who completed the programme was 40%. The experience of endeavouring to deal with such participant attrition was exemplified by two respondents:

*Like again, I followed up and tried to sort of say to them and they just kind of said ‘I stopped or something got in the way’ and I tried to go back to them. It was just kind of a loss, so I lost them really.*

Interviewee No. 2

*As my dad [a teacher] advises and says... you can’t save everyone, you save who you can save.*

Interviewee No. 5

Similarly, further survey attrition analysis revealed that the motivation and continued engagement of students in the Award programme was of pertinent concern for 26% of teacher PALs.

*The biggest challenge is trying to keep the students motivated to continue with the Award and with their ongoing commitment. They start off very enthusiastically, but this can often dwindle or even lapse. I think parents are not informed enough despite being given the literature, etc. by me.*

Interviewee No. 83

While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the impact that such student Award attrition has on youth outcomes, established research has indicated that prematurely abandoning a youth mentoring programme may increase the detrimental effects on youth behaviours, emotions and social development (Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Kupersmidt et al., 2017). Furthermore, such programme attrition may negatively impact the relationship dynamics of school connectedness as well as a student's belief 'that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals' (Blum and Libbey, 2004, p. 230). Moreover, according to Shochet et al. (2006, p.170), 'school connectedness has been specifically shown to predict future depressive symptoms in adolescents'. Consequently, it is clear that the effects of Gaisce programme attrition warrant further research analysis.

### **5.2: Challenge Two: Busyness of a Gaisce Teacher PAL: How Much Weekly Time do you Give to Managing Gaisce Participants?**

Findings from this study show that 91% of PAL participants spent less than three hours per week implementing the Gaisce Award programme in their schools. Furthermore, time poverty and busy school schedules were cited as notable causes for concern, with more than 60% of survey participants citing it as a 'challenge'. As observed in this report, the 'busyness of a teacher PAL's school life' is a recurring theme in both Survey A and B. Interestingly, evidence from this study also suggested the existence of a causal relationship between Award programme attrition and the busyness of a teacher. Three pertinent responses that exemplify this relationship are outlined below:

*Yes, motivating students to do the community involvement aspect of the award and to record it properly. It is also a challenge motivating those who lose interest during the year. Time restraints are always a challenging factor.*

*Interviewee No. 41*

*Keeping young people motivated to keep doing Gaisce. Organising the adventure journey safely. Getting time to support students more fully*

*Interviewee No. 69*

*Yeah, they're straight into the Leaving Cert courses, yeah, they're just run off their feet. That's why we don't get as many of them. We only get a couple that would want to do Silver. Like, it's a huge shock for them when they, you know, like in Transition Year, they can do different things and they're a little bit more in control but now there's a crushing timetable on top of them and they've all these Assignments*

*Interviewee No. 4*

The central tenet of such responses raises a nuanced concern and questions whether such Gaisce PALs who suffer from time poverty – and whose expressions of limited availability for meeting and building relations with their Award constituents – can in fact 'make a difference' or 'attach value' to the lives of their mentees. In established mentoring research, Pryce (2012, p. 285) advocates 'that the experience of transformation aspired to by the iconic mentoring relationship represents an exceptional level of effort and commitment'.

### 5.3: Recommendations and Suggestions for Research and Practice

Based on the observations from both Survey A and Survey B, a number of suggestions and recommendations for further Gaisce practice and research can be made.

First, findings from this study indicate that while the majority of PALs professed to 'being valued' by their students, 40% of their annual Award participants failed to complete the Award programme. While established findings indicate that early attrition to such self-development programmes may have a harmful effect on youth behaviour (Kupersmidt et al., 2017), it would be beneficial for future Gaisce research to better identify and comprehend the impacts on mentor/mentee relationships that such Award attrition has. Further investigation into the causes and consequences of such youth Award attrition is warranted. Second, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative research illustrated that due to the busyness of academic life, Award participants and Gaisce PALs spent less than 180 minutes per week engaging in mentor/mentee relationships, with an average of 33 mentees per participant recorded. Given that prior research has consistently indicated that frequency of contact and match duration is linked to positive youth and programme success outcomes (Silke et al., 2019), further research to examine that nature and scope of such time demands may prove beneficial (Bowers, 2015). Furthermore, new practices to improve communication, perceptions of relationship quality and online engagement in light of current COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are suggested as warranting progression

Similarly, although Gaisce PAL mentors expressed high levels of role satisfaction and fulfilment in both the qualitative and quantitative studies, and while 80% of Gaisce PAL respondents were female, apprehensions were raised in the area of youth safeguarding. In particular, the challenge of safeguarding the programme's Adventure Journey was expressed by a number of PAL participants, who cited a lack of mountaineering expertise and inadequate resources as areas of unease. As a result, it may also be beneficial for Gaisce programme practitioners and policymakers to address these concerns, building additional Journey mechanisms in order to maximise volunteer recruitment and mentor retention.

Finally, this study revealed a rich and diverse tapestry of views, opinions, claims and beliefs, encapsulating the expressed and amplified views of Gaisce Teacher PALs, Gaisce staff and Board members, Award participants, parents and wider academic educators. While recognising that past Gaisce research has been focused on specific issues requiring investigation at a specific moment in time (Clarke-MacMahon, 2013; Furlong; 2019; Genesis 2012), it is clear from the technology of this research project that a continuous collaborative system of social research is warranted. While the essence of the Gaisce Award is rooted in an existential dimension of education (Dewey, 1897), the adoption of a continuous, collaborative process of organisation learning may prove beneficial. As asserted by Angelides et al., (2008), such processes are successful because they support reflection and experimentation and offer everyone involved the opportunity to consider new possibilities.

#### 5.4: Conclusion: Making a Difference

By quantitatively and qualitatively examining the practices and perceptions surrounding the life of a Gaisce Teacher PAL in a selection of Irish secondary schools, there is ample empirical evidence in this study to support the assertion that in their role as Gaisce PALs, teachers perceive that they do attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people. Notwithstanding some pertinent concerns regarding high attrition levels and busyness affecting mentor/mentee relations, the overall consensus is that Gaisce Teacher PALs have a significant impact on both the lives of their Award mentees and on Gaisce's organisational existence.

The central tenet of this work is that the model is dependent upon the dynamic and ever-changing role that Gaisce Teacher PALs play as teachers, mentors and volunteers. As emphasised by respondents, 'making a difference' was classified as helping, supporting, influencing, empathising, facilitating and motivating their participants. In particular, the positive engagement of DEIS students was exemplified; therefore, it is clear that such positive experiences warrant a separate investigation on the wider social impact of the programme on the constructs of representative democracy (Costello, 1984) in a growing neoliberalist domain (President of Ireland, 2015).

As further evidenced, Gaisce Teacher PAL volunteers exhibit a lifelong commitment to the programme, with 52% of volunteers having spent more than ten years implementing the programme in their schools.

Furthermore, a consensus of PALs has advocated that their role should not be rewarded. While a further commitment to experiential learning was evidenced – with more than 70% of Gaisce PALs having completed more than three Adventure Journeys – the advent of COVID-19 social restrictions has challenged the intrinsic ethos of the Award programme.

While this study has empirically gathered a collection of illuminating evidence, and while these findings may provide a further beneficial framework for practice, the conclusive recommendation is that the present study provides an ideal platform from which to construct a continuous collaborative system of social research to support reflection, consideration and new possibilities.

In conclusion, this study has shown that the role of the Gaisce Teacher PAL is of the utmost significance, and such importance is best exemplified by a respondent with more than forty years' experience as a Gaisce PAL:

*Well, put it this way Philip (laughs), this is, like, in any teacher in any school, like, if any school is good at, for example, badminton, there's a teacher who is promoting it, okay. So, if there's nobody promoting it that school won't be good or basketball or rugby or whatever activity you want. So, if there wasn't a teacher doing it, there would be almost nobody doing Gaisce in our school.*

Interviewee No. 4

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Gaisce PAL Research 2020



## References:

Maxwells Dublin, 2017. *President Presents Gaisce Gold Awards 2017*. [image] Available at: <<https://president.ie/en/media-library/photos/president-presents-gaisce-gold-awards-2017>> [Accessed 6 March 2020].

# Appendix

Gaisce PAL Research 2020

- A. Strand A Questionnaire**
- B. Strand B Questionnaire**
- C. Strand A Responses Detailed**

Section A

## Strand A: Online Questionnaire

### Characteristics and Behaviours

Q.A1) What county are you working in?

Q.A2) How long have you been working in educational establishments?

- Less than 1 year
- More than 1 year and less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 9 years
- Between 10 and 19 years
- 20+ years

Q.A3) What is your highest level of educational achievement

- Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6)
- Diploma
- Ordinary Degree (NFQ Level 7)
- Honours Bachelor's Degree (NFQ Level 8)
- Postgraduate Diploma (NFQ Level 8/9)
- Taught Master's Degree (NFQ Level 9)
- Research Master's Degree (NFQ Level 9)
- PhD (NFQ Level 10)
- Other:

Q.A4) What is the title of your current position?

Q.A5) What age bracket are you in?

- 18–24 years old
- 25–34 years old
- 35–44 years old
- 45–54 years old
- 55+
- Prefer not to say

Q.A6) What is your Gender?

- Female

Q.A7) How would you describe the school you currently work in?

- DEIS school
- Non-DEIS school
- Other:

Q.A8) Can you describe the gender category of the school you currently work in?

- A mixed-gender school
- A single-sex boys school
- A single-sex girls school

Q.A9) How many students are there in your school?

- Less than 100
- Between 101 and 400
- Between 401 and 700
- Between 701 and 1000
- Between 1001 and 1300
- More than 1300

Q.A10) How long has your school been involved in the Gaisce Award programme?

- Less than 1 year
- More than 1 year and less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 9 years
- Between 10 and 19 years
- 20+ years

Q.A11) Does your school facilitate Gaisce participants to progress to Silver and/or Gold Awards?

- We offer Bronze Awards only
- We offer Bronze and Silver Awards only
- We offer Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards to all participants
- We offer Gold Awards only

Q.A12) Have ever taken part in the Gaisce Award programme as a participant?

- No
- Yes - I achieved a Bronze Award
- Yes - I achieved a Bronze and Silver Award
- Yes - I achieved a Bronze, Silver and Gold Award

## Strand A: Online Questionnaire

### Characteristics and Behaviours

- Q.A13) How long have you been a Gaisce PAL?**
- Less than 1 year
  - More than 1 year and less than 5 years
  - Between 5 and 9 years
  - Between 10 and 19 years
  - 20+ years
- Q.A14) How did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?**
- Q.A15) Are you working on the Gaisce programme alone or do you have a team supporting you?**
- I work on the Gaisce programme alone
  - I work with another Gaisce PAL/PALs and team members
  - I work with other non-Gaisce PAL team members
- Q.A16) How many Bronze, Silver or Gold participants are you managing for the Academic Year 2019/2020?**
- Bronze
  - Silver
  - Gold
- Q.A17) Gaisce currently organises Silver and Gold Award ceremonies. Have you ever attended a Gaisce organised awards ceremony?**
- No
  - Yes
- Q.A17a) If you have not attended a Gaisce-organised awards ceremony (Q.17), would you like to specify a reason for your non-attendance?**
- Q.A18) In your role as a PAL, how much time do you give to Gaisce participants on a weekly basis?**
- Less than 3 hours per week
  - Between 3 and 5 hours per week
  - Between 5 and 10 hours per week
  - Between 10 and 15 hours per week
  - More than 15 hours per week
- Q.A19) How much time do you give to non-Gaisce volunteering on a weekly basis?**
- Between 3 and 5 hours per week
  - Between 5 and 10 hours per week
  - Between 10 and 15 hours per week
  - More than 15 hours per week
- Q.A20) Whether within your school or elsewhere, are you involved in additional extra-curricular activities, e.g. volunteering with any other organisations?**
- Q.A21) With regard to your Adventure Journey, over the past 24 months, please outline how you approached organising this activity?**
- We organised it through an Adventure Centre
  - We organised it independently
  - We used an independent guide
- Q.A22) How would you rate the physical nature of the Adventure Journey you are expected partake in as a PAL?**
- Not particularly challenging
  - Moderately challenging
  - Gratifyingly challenging
  - Excessively challenging
  - Other
- Q.A23) How many Gaisce Adventure Journeys have you participated in personally?**
- 1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10
  - Between 11 and 20
  - More than 20

## Strand A: Online Questionnaire

### Conceptualisation of PAL Role: Motivation for Becoming a PAL

- Q.B1) How do you see yourself in your role as a PAL?
- As a youth mentor
  - As a youth leader
  - As a youth influencer
  - Other
- Q.B3) Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participants?
- Q.B4) In your role as a Gaisce PAL, who values you?
- Q.B6) What motivated you to get involved as a Gaisce PAL?
- Q.B7) What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Benefits and Challenges of Being a PAL

- Q.C1) What do you enjoy most about being a Gaisce PAL?
- Q.C2) If you believe in the Gaisce programme as a personal development programme please explain how you believe this is of benefit?
- Q.C3) Are there any challenges that you experience in your role as a PAL?
- Q.C4) What do you believe prevents participants' progression to a Silver Award?

### Programme Effectiveness and Support

- Q.D1) Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?
- Q.D2) Can you suggest any additional training you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?
- Q.D3) If Gaisce were to offer PAL events, which ones would you be most likely to attend in 2021 and beyond?
- Q.D4) As a Gaisce PAL, would you be willing to participate in a qualitative study that seeks to record your experiences and insights as a secondary school Gaisce PAL?
- Q.D5) Since 22 March, Gaisce has been running 'Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile' in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The campaign encourages participants to continue their Gaisce Award and/or young people to sign up for the Gaisce Award during this time. If you have insights or observations of 'Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile' on the campaign, please share your experience below:
- Q.D6) Do you have any additional comments?

## Strand B: Qualitative Interviews

Code	Characteristics and Behaviours of a PAL
Q.A1B	What county are you working in?
Q.A2B	How long have you been working in the educational establishments?
Q.A3B	What is your highest level of educational achievement?
Q.A4B	What is the title of your current position?
Q.A5B	What age bracket are you in?
Q.A6B	What is your gender?
Q.A7B	How would you describe the school you currently work in?
Q.A8B	Can you describe the gender category of the school you currently work in?
Q.A9B	How many pupils are there in your school?
Q.A10B	How long has your school been involved in the Gaisce Programme?
Q.A11B	Does your school facilitate Gaisce participants to progress to: Silver and/or Gold Award?
Q.A12B	How long have you been a Gaisce PAL?
	<b>Motivation for Becoming a PAL</b>
Q.B13B	Why did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?
Q.B14B	What motivated you to become involved as a Gaisce PAL?
Q.B15B	What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL ?
	<b>Conceptualisation of Role</b>
Q.C16B	How would you regard your overall experience of being a PAL?
Q.C17B	How do you see yourself in your role as a PAL? As a youth mentor, leader, influencer, or other?
Q.C19B	Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participant/s?
Q.D22B	As a PAL, do you find your role fulfilling and has it met the expectations you had when you agreed to undertake the role?
Q.D23B	Do you feel that you are valued for the contribution you make as a PAL – by Gaisce, the participants themselves, your school, and the parents of the participants?
Q.D24B	Who Values you most for the work you do as a PAL?
Q.D25B	Do you think your role as a PAL should be recognised or rewarded?

Code	Benefits and Challenges of being a PAL
Q.D20B	What do you enjoy most about being a PAL?
Q.D21B	Are there any challenges that you experience in your role as a PAL?
	<b>Perceptions of Programme Support</b>
Q.E26B	Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?
Q.E27B	Are there any additional resources you think you require to offer Silver/Gold Awards?
Q.E28B	What would you regard as the most useful/relevant aspect of the PAL training programme?
Q.E29B	Can you suggest any additional training which you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?
Q.E30B	If there were any PAL events organised in 2020 and beyond, would you be interested in attending them and, if so, what kind of events would appeal to you?
Q.E31B	Would you be interested in joining a PAL peer support network?
Q.E32B	Do you feel supported within your own school or organisation as a PAL?
Q.E37B	Is there anything that you might be able to do to make you a more effective mentor?
	<b>Perceptions of Programme Effectiveness</b>
Q.C18B	What do you think is the unique selling proposition or central element of the Gaisce programme?
Q.E33B	What do you think prevents young people from registering to do the Gaisce programme?
Q.E34B	What do you think prevents young people from completing the Gaisce programme?
Q.E35B	Do you believe that the Gaisce awards are regarded as a valuable achievement by those who participate in them?
Q.E36B	Please evaluate and/or suggest which you think are the most important benefits to Gaisce participants: i. The positive impact on their emotional and psychological well-being ii. An opportunity for them to forge new social relationships and friendships and subsequently to improve their social skills. iii. A chance for them to enhance their CV's.
Q.E40B	Do you have any additional comments?

## Strand B: Qualitative Interviews

Code	Characteristics and Behaviours of a PAL
Q.A1B	What county are you working in?
Q.A2B	How long have you been working in the educational establishments?
Q.A3B	What is your highest level of educational achievement?
Q.A4B	What is the title of your current position?
Q.A5B	What age bracket are you in?
Q.A6B	What is your gender?
Q.A7B	How would you describe the school you currently work in?
Q.A8B	Can you describe the gender category of the school you currently work in?
Q.A9B	How many pupils are there in your school?
Q.A10B	How long has your school been involved in the Gaisce Programme?
Q.A11B	Does your school facilitate Gaisce participants to progress to: Silver and/or Gold Award?
Q.A12B	How long have you been a Gaisce PAL?
	<b>Motivation for Becoming a PAL</b>
Q.B13B	Why did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?
Q.B14B	What motivated you to become involved as a Gaisce PAL?
Q.B15B	What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL ?
	<b>Conceptualisation of Role</b>
Q.B16B	How would you regard your overall experience of being a PAL?
Q.B17B	How do you see yourself in your role as a PAL? As a youth mentor, leader, influencer, or other?
Q.B19B	Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participant/s?
Q.B22B	As a PAL, do you find your role fulfilling and has it met the expectations you had when you agreed to undertake the role?
Q.B23B	Do you feel that you are valued for the contribution you make as a PAL – by Gaisce, the participants themselves, your school, and the parents of the participants?
Q.B24B	Who Values you most for the work you do as a PAL?
Q.B25B	Do you think your role as a PAL should be recognised or rewarded?

Code	Benefits and Challenges of being a PAL
Q.C20B	What do you enjoy most about being a PAL?
Q.C21B	Are there any challenges that you experience in your role as a PAL?
	<b>Perceptions of Programme Support</b>
Q.D26B	Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?
Q.D27B	Are there any additional resources you think you require to offer Silver/Gold Awards?
Q.D28B	What would you regard as the most useful/relevant aspect of the PAL training programme?
Q.D29B	Can you suggest any additional training which you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?
Q.D30B	If there were any PAL events organised in 2020 and beyond, would you be interested in attending them and, if so, what kind of events would appeal to you?
Q.D31B	Would you be interested in joining a PAL peer support network?
Q.D32B	Do you feel supported within your own school or organisation as a PAL?
Q.D37B	Is there anything that you might be able to do to make you a more effective mentor?
	<b>Perceptions of Programme Effectiveness</b>
Q.D18B	What do you think is the unique selling proposition or central element of the Gaisce programme?
Q.D33B	What do you think prevents young people from registering to do the Gaisce programme?
Q.D34B	What do you think prevents young people from completing the Gaisce programme?
Q.D35B	Do you believe that the Gaisce awards are regarded as a valuable achievement by those who participate in them?
Q.D36B	Please evaluate and/or suggest which you think are the most important benefits to Gaisce participants: i. The positive impact on their emotional and psychological well-being ii. An opportunity for them to forge new social relationships and friendships and subsequently to improve their social skills. iii. A chance for them to enhance their CV's.
Q.D40B	Do you have any additional comments?

# Appendix

Gaisce PAL Research 2020

- A. Survey A Questionnaire**
- B. Survey B Questionnaire**
- C. Survey A Responses Detailed**

Section A

## How did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Helping a current PAL or part of PAL handover programme.

1	I am a very keen hiker and spend a lot of time outdoors. [I] often met groups of young people from the Duke of Edinburgh Award doing their Adventure Journey in the Mourne Mountains and was interested in starting a similar scheme in a school in which I worked in Belfast. I met with other PALs to find out more but then left that school. The next school I worked in already had the President's Award up and running, so I took the opportunity to become a PAL.	50	I have always been interested, but usually schools have people running it and no space to join in.
2	For my own career reasons/prospects... I wanted to explore a different relationship experience with the participants.	54	The PAL in the school asked me [to] get involved as she wanted help.
6	From a colleague.	56	I became involved through work by helping out the existing PAL and was encouraged to do the training.
11	I was lead for Duke of Edinburgh in my previous school and loved this. Gaisce was in my current school, but my colleague who was running it had lots of other responsibilities in KCC, and I felt she needed support, so I got involved.	63	In my first year out of college, I was asked by a teacher in Scoil Dara to get involved and help with participants.
12	<a href="#">I helped out a previous PAL.</a>	64	<a href="#">The previous PAL retired, and I didn't want Gaisce to die in the school.</a>
15	From another teacher who was a PAL.	65	When I joined the school.
18	<a href="#">From my principal.</a>	67	I took over from another staff member in 00.
19	Colleagues.	70	From another teacher [who] established it in a new school in 00.
24	The programme is run in the school, and I had been involved in personal skill and community involvement activities in the school.	71	Another work colleague.
25	Colleague.	72	I took over from the outgoing PAL who was retiring.
27	Through the previous PAL in my school.	75	Colleague.
32	Gaisce was in the school when I started, so I heard of it through the teacher who was a PAL at the time.	76	Principal Norma O'Brien.
38	I took over from an existing PAL in my school.	82	School.
42	Through a colleague in school.	85	<a href="#">Was asked to help another PAL.</a>
44	Through the Gaisce website and by talking to former PALs in my school.	86	I took over the role from another
45	I took over from the previous PAL in the school.		
47	My old PAL.		
48	School.		
49	teacher in my school.		

## How did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Developing a new Gaisce programme in school.

8	I was aware of the programme from my own school days and wished to start up the programme in my school.	62	[I] was curious about training as I was aware of the programme. [I] think it offers a lot [...]
14	I knew of the programme from other schools, and so researched how I could get it started.		was lucky to attend training and become a Gaisce PAL. I have assisted students with Gaisce in the school for years now.
16	<a href="#">Internet.</a>	66	<a href="#">Online [is where I] got information.</a>
22	Through participating in Gaisce myself.	69	I had participated in Gaisce previously, so I knew there was a way to become a leader.
29	John Murphy asked me to become involved.	81	I was on the Interview Board, a[nd] young people who had participated in Gaisce spoke about [their] experience.
33	Michael Collins, Gaisce Volunteer, came to our school. A newly qualified teacher had achieved a Gold Award and had informed us of the programme. It was her who invited Michael Collins to come and introduce the programme to our students.	84	I heard about the programme from a colleague, and I made contact with Gaisce to enquire about becoming a PAL.
35	It was something I always wanted to do after completing all the awards myself. [I] found the value of it during my time at school and wanted to give students that I'm teaching the same opportunity. [I] think it is very beneficial to students; it broadens their minds, gives them the opportunity to give back to their communities through sport, volunteering, etc., [and] makes them more community aware and realise how important being part of a community is. It also builds confidence, self-worth, and also a great sense of achievement [by] setting a goal that is weeks in achieving.		
37	I was contacted by Gaisce after completing my Gold. It was sometime later before I did the training to become a PAL and then offered it in my school.		
40	I wanted to do it in school; there [were] no PALs.		
46	I was a Bronze recipient myself and wanted to offer students the same opportunity started the Gaisce programme in my previous school, but I've transferred to a different school in the last years.		
49	Gaisce website.		
53	From being a participant myself.		
55	Internet.		
58	The internet.		
59	I was involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards while working in London, so [I] sought the equivalent here.		
61	By doing Gaisce and having a PAL and wanting to bring it to my school.		

## How did you become involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Helping with a TY programme or part of a TY role of responsibility.

- 17 Macra, TY Co-ordinator.  
20 I had completed it in school and thought it would be good to offer for TYs.  
23 Necessity. We introduced TY and were advised that Gaisce was a great sub-programme for TY. We got the advice from other schools with strong established TY programmes. There were no trained staff in the school, and it was tough to get volunteers initially, so I put myself forward.  
26 TY.  
28 TY Co-ordinator.  
30 From my predecessor (TY Co-ordinator).  
31 I was aware of Gaisce while working in another school many year ago. I had gone on the hike, and overnight I was appointed to the role of TY Co-ordinator in [school], and I therefore wanted to introduce new activities, [so I] went about finding out about how to get trained up as a PAL.  
34 Part of my job.  
36 I'm the TY Co-ordinator, so I get leaflets all the time.  
39 Research and talking to other school TY Co-ordinators.  
41 I wanted to run Gaisce for TY students, so I researched what was involved online.  
43 As TY Co-ordinator in my school, I introduced it to the student .  
57 Through TY co-ordination.  
60 Through co-ordinating TY.  
68 I took over TY from another teacher and trained as a PAL.  
73 School TY Co-ordinator asked me if I would be interested in doing it with TY students, and I accepted.  
77 Through TY programme at school.  
79 TY Co-ordinator.  
80 Online and our TY Co-ordinator invited Paul in to speak to that group while I had them last year; she asked if I would be interested in doing the training, [and I] was delighted.  
83 Gaisce had been running in our school before I became the designated TY Co-ordinator, but there was very sporadic participation as the PAL was not involved directly in the TY programme, so I learned about becoming a PAL from the previous PAL in the school and decided to train myself as I felt it made more sense for me to be informed and trained so as to be able to directly support and encourage student participation.  
87 I think Gaisce sent a notice to the school decades ago, and I was interested as I was involved with TYs as a TY Co-ordinator at the time.

### Response: A parent, student or other request.

- 21 A previous job working with youth.  
51 A parent suggested it years ago.  
52 A student asked if the school could start the Gaisce programme, so I looked into it.

## What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Enjoyment and involvement in positive youth development.

1	I thoroughly enjoy being a PAL, and I can see how much the young people can benefit from the programme.	39	I really enjoyed watching the students getting the most from something they experience first-hand.
8	I love the programme, the buzz about the programme and seeing the young people grow in confidence throughout the school year.	42	I enjoy working with young people in a non-competitive environment.
11	I love working with students outside the classroom setting. Gaisce allows opportunities for students who may have been quiet or not the sportiest to thrive and become leaders. I have seen students grow in confidence and self-belief after dealing with volunteering situations or getting lost on a trek but finally finding camp and seeing students who would not hang out in school gel in different environments.	43	I see what the students get out of it, and I enjoy the activities.
		45	I enjoy working with young people to help fulfil goals.
		46	I enjoy working with young people beyond the classroom.
		48	Self-fulfilment.
		49	The students' enjoyment.
12	<a href="#">The satisfaction of seeing young people achieve a goal.</a>	50	I think it's great for students.
17	I love helping the students. I enjoy the Gaisce project, and I really believe in its core values.	52	The students enjoy getting involved.
		53	I see the benefits young people gain from it - confidence or the Gaisce attitude that stays with them for years.
20	<a href="#">Seeing the end result and how happy participants are when they complete something, they didn't think they would be able to.</a>	54	I see the fun in everything that is done as well as the personal satisfaction as a reward.
22	How much the students benefit from it and enjoy it.	56	I like the programme, and it's nice to see participants grow in confidence.
23	I love to see students overcome hurdles or barriers, grow into independent young adults, [and] gain from experiences as opposed to just doing them.	57	Seeing students achieve challenges.
27	Seeing young people get out of their comfort zones and growing.	59	An excellent programme giving students and PALs an excellent experience throughout TY and beyond.
28	Enjoyment.	62	[I] enjoy working with students and love when students become engaged with the programme and really enjoy it.
29	Giving young adults an opportunity to involve themselves in a process that they are in control of, that gives them fundamental skills for life [that are], if possible, non-computer based.	66	<a href="#">Satisfaction that students get having completed their tasks, and also the hike.</a>
32	Seeing the students get involved in the various activities and going all the way to the Gold Award.	72	I enjoy encouraging the participants throughout the year and seeing their satisfaction on award night - sometimes it is the only medal they get - and their self-esteem is clearly seen.
34	I enjoy all aspects of Gaisce, and it is in my job spec.	80	The benefit to pupils who participated this year; the energy and enthusiasm it brought was fabulous.
35	The joy the students get out of it and them telling me how they have enjoyed it more than anything else they've done throughout the year. They love the skills they get and how rewarding it is to be involved in different things in the community.		
36	I'm the TY Co-ordinator and PE teacher, so it's right up my alley.		

## What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Helping a current PAL or part of PAL handover programme.

1	I am a very keen hiker and spend a lot of time outdoors. [I] often met groups of young people from the Duke of Edinburgh Award doing their Adventure Journey in the Mourne Mountains and was interested in starting a similar scheme in a school in which I worked in Belfast. I met with other PALs to find out more but then left that school. The next school I worked in already had the President's Award up and running, so I took the opportunity to become a PAL.	50	I have always been interested, but usually schools have people running it and no space to join in.
2	For my own career reasons/prospects... I wanted to explore a different relationship experience with the participants.	54	The PAL in the school asked me [to] get involved as she wanted help.
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15	From another teacher who was a PAL.	65	When I joined the school.
18	<a href="#">From my principal.</a>	67	I took over from another staff member in 00.
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24	The programme is run in the school, and I had been involved in personal skill and community involvement activities in the school.	71	Another work colleague.
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38	I took over from an existing PAL in my school.	82	School.
42	Through a colleague in school.	85	<a href="#">Was asked to help another PAL.</a>
44	Through the Gaisce website and by talking to former PALs in my school.	86	I took over the role from another teacher in my school
45	I took over from the previous PAL in the school.		
47	My old PAL.		
48	School.		
.			

## If you believe in the Gaisce programme as a personal development programme, please explain how you believe this tool is of benefit?

### Responses: Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits PALs and students.

- 1 I have seen young people grow in confidence through the Gaisce programme. I have seen the way in which they have gone outside of their comfort zone in order to discover new skills and new experiences. I have witnessed their pride in completing the Adventure Journey, despite their hesitancy or lack of self-belief.
- 8 [The] Gaisce programme provides a different space in which to work with young people and to foster positive relationships outside of the classroom. Ultimately, this helps me in my approach to teaching young people.
- 31 I see it more as a personal development tool for the students. Having said that, I found the PAL training I received [to be] fantastic. Indeed, I would love some top-up.
- 39 I enjoy the outdoors and the interaction between the school, students, teachers and community groups or personnel. It gives them a different perspective about how the community works.
- 41 As a PAL, it gives me insights into the satisfaction of achievement. It is a fulfilling experience to participate in the growth and achievement of others, especially young people. It also promotes positive awareness and the personal reward that follows planning, undertaking, and fulfilling goals. Achieving Gaisce is something to be proud of.
- 44 I see the Gaisce programme as a personal development tool for all participants, leaders and learners alike. I see the confidence that participants gain over the duration of their involvement in the programme. I am also involved in water safety, outside school, as a coach and a participant. Any activity where a participant has an opportunity to find his/her niche is worthwhile. Gaisce opens so many doors and possibilities to the participants: meeting new people, volunteering, taking on challenges [and] making commitments. Participants discover their strengths. They begin to appreciate interdependence as well as independence.
- 84 Many of our students are involved in many aspects of the Gaisce programme without actually having information regarding the award. As a PAL, [I] can introduce the students to the programme, inform them about the award and help them along their Gaisce Journey, and in doing so support their personal development.

### Responses: Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits PALs.

- 19 [It] reminds me that there is another side to young people outside the classroom.
- 38 I see this as an opportunity to provide leadership in a different capacity to students. It has also pushed me to improve my organisational skills and management skills. It has allowed me to interact with students in a less academic manner and has helped to strengthen my relationships with my students, leading to more respectful interactions with them in the classroom and in the wider school community. It has also helped me to form links with people in the wider community geographically in the area of the school.
- 55 [It] allowed me to connect with students.
- 74 [I can] get to know the kids on a different level.
- 77 [I explored learning outside \[the\] school setting and was motivated to learn a new skill myself.](#)
- 80 [It] keeps me enthusiastic and vibrant for the benefit of my students and organisation.
- 82 It is inspiring to support young people in achieving their award [and] to see their proud faces, knowing they have stuck with it and achieved.

## If you believe in the Gaisce programme as a personal development programme, please explain how you believe this tool is of benefit?

### Responses: Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits students.

6	It helps develop the leadership capacity of others, which can be useful in interviews.	32	Teaches the students about being self-motivated and about the importance of contributing to society/helping others.
11	Students have to take ownership for the four areas within the award. They are guided, but there is no chasing or spoon-feeding, [which] can happen with time restraints within a class setting. The Adventure Journey is a key piece in the puzzle for me, seeing students outside their normal environment and having to guide themselves, make camp and cook shows what students can do when given the opportunities. [...] also, the leadership, where you see often quiet students grow in confidence over the 13 weeks to be able to take control of a group or show initiative, and at times I feel students don't have these opportunities without the Gaisce award.	33	It develops the students in so many aspects of life; it encourages them to develop a skill, to get involved in their community, to give back to their community later in life and to live and lead a healthy happy life.
12	<i>It gives students opportunities to develop in areas that school does not allow for.</i>	34	It allows the participants to develop and acquire skills that are transferable.
14	It helps participants see themselves differently. They may not have considered engaging in these activities before, and it challenges them to be the kind of person who builds resilience.	37	I think students have been able to develop new skill sets and learn a lot about their own abilities and about the world around them. I have seen some incredible work done through community involvement.
17	It allows the students in a DEIS school to explore their own life and expand the[ie] horizons.	40	Open their mind[s] to lots of opportunities.
20	<i>It is a great way of making friends, and I feel it builds great confidence in students as well as a sense of satisfaction when they have completed something they had never done before.</i>	42	Gives the participants an opportunity to work in their community.
21	<i>I like how students need to commit to set activities.</i>	43	Gives students confidence, teaches commitment [and] develops social and communication skills.
22	[It] promotes the development of self-confidence [and the] improvement of skills [and] encourages students to move outside their comfort zones.	46	It encourages young people to become active citizens by doing community work. It promotes personal development through learning new skills and undertaking the Adventure Journey, and it teaches them how to commit to a long-term goal. Instant gratification is too common in our society. The long-term commitment required by Gaisce empowers students to challenge themselves in a safe and meaningful way.
24	Mainly the community involvement. Students sometimes lack the initiative to help others around them. Once they've a reason to start, a lot of our students continue with their community involvement after they have completed the course.	48	Allows you to stand on your own two feet, giving you [the] confidence to interact with others and cope outside your comfort zone.
25	It is an opportunity to promote initiative, independence, reflection and community [and] social responsibility in students.	49	Learning from the students who take part in the programme, especially their stories and experiences in their community placement.
26	Growth.	51	Non-competitive students can get involved in sport, young people feel good about helping others, [and] hiking and hostelling help people to connect with each other and the natural world. It is good for their health and self-worth.
29	It introduces them to goal setting that is achievable and possibilities to dream for more.	54	Yes, I believe the various tasks can show a student how to engage in the community for their and other people's benefit. This can help with building their confidence and development.
30	It empowers students to go outside their comfort zone and encourages them to take on leadership roles.	56	It allows you to challenge yourself.

## If you believe in the Gaisce programme as a personal development programme, please explain how you believe this tool is of benefit?

### Responses: Gaisce as a personal development tool that benefits students.

- 59 It encourages independence, student voice and an authentic experience for students to support their physical, social and community contributions and general wellbeing. It also helps students to regulate their time and weekly contribution to the programme.
- 62 Develops relationships with young people and offers job satisfaction. [I] have [had] some enjoyable experiences as a result of Gaisce, e.g. supervising [the] Adventure Journey; also, [I] find I am more likely to try out new things and try to commit for at least 13 weeks if it's what I ask of my students.
- 63 It enables and celebrates achievements of young adults who might not achieve such awards, especially those that are not big sports fans or [are] reserved. It celebrates all types of personalities and is achievable with a little commitment.
- 67 I think it teaches young people to have a sense of commitment. It encourages the participants to look out for others and encourages people to try new opportunities.
- 68 Community work in particular gets the students to give of themselves.
- 69 I think it teaches young people core skills such as responsibility and perseverance and the importance of volunteering, skills they may not otherwise get to do
- 71 It allows participants the opportunity to aspire to achieving a goal that they would have not previously aspired to. It is structured to help them develop their management skills, and by using the log, it encourages them to work consistently towards achieving their goal. It puts a value on their achievement that may have otherwise gone unrecognised and develops their self-esteem. It encourages them to engage as active citizens in their community.
- 72 Prior to becoming [a] PAL, our school only did Silver; I introduced Bronze as I felt we could encourage a larger number of students to get involved, some of whom would have little opportunity to achieve at this level. The task levels are attainable, and so our success rate at Bronze was roughly 80 to 90%. Through volunteering, it gave some of the students great focus, and at times, with feedback from our careers teacher, I learned that it helped with career choices.
- 76 It provides opportunities for young people to develop skills and opportunities to progress as a person and prepare them for life after school.
- 83 I feel that it gives a chance for the young people to shine in areas of development outside of school and be rewarded for that engagement. It recognises that the student engaged in self-directed learning of a voluntary nature, undertaken independently, and demonstrated commitment to that area.
- 85 Yes, [it] forces them to interact with adults, and they must organise their activities themselves, so it is their responsibility, and [it] gets them to develop new skills.
- 86 It gives the student an opportunity to set personal goals while achieving a national young person's award. It gives a sense of personal achievement.

## Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participants?

### Responses: Positive 'Yes' responses.

1	Yes. I am a PAL because I believe that I do make a difference to the participants through the Gaisce programme. I have referred to the way in which Gaisce helps to build resilience and self-confidence in young people.	58	Yes, my students seem to love the activities and support.
8	Yes, I do. You motivate and encourage them; you lift them up and help them achieve their potential.	60	Yes, I offer advice on activities they can do.
11	Yes, the gentle reminders and the encouragement is crucial for students' personal development. It is possibly not measurable, but the impact is vast in my opinion.	61	Yes, especially if they were unsure about continuing.
12	Yes.	66	Yes. Constantly checking in on their activities and encouraging girls.
14	Yes. They know I believe in them.	67	I do. I try and encourage and facilitate them on their Gaisce Journey.
18	Yes.	71	Yes, encouraging participants to stay on their journey and supporting them. Helping students see the potential in themselves. Someone they can check in with if they are unsure. Having someone that is looking at their progress encourages and motivates them to keep going.
19	Yes, in that it facilitates the students.	72	I definitely do, but the students may see me as a pest who chases them week in/week out for 'stuff.' It usually ends well, and it is easy to see the growth and maturity when they complete it.
23	Yes. Maybe not to all but to most. I am very straight-talking and no-nonsense but fair. When they see how committed I am to them, they appreciate it.	73	Yes, as I['m] there to help, motivate and encourage
26	Yes.	74	Yes.
27	Yes. I think I give them a way to bridge the gap between teacher and student.	78	Yes.
28	Yes.	79	Yes.
29	Yes. Definitely.	80	Absolutely through motivation and encouragement.
33	Yes. They have been given the opportunity to set goals and achieve them, and it is recognised nationally.	81	Yes.
34	Yes. They are always very thankful for being a support on the programme.	83	Yes, I feel I make a difference as I facilitate, organise and participate in the Adventure Journey. I also support the students with the selection of each element for the award, and I provide ongoing advice to the students and their parents if and when necessary. I also remind the students on a regular basis of the need to keep up their commitment and encourage them to do so. I also answer queries and support with registration.
37	Yes, I do. I believe I can guide and motivate them to challenge themselves.	84	Yes, I do, as I see myself as the link for the young person wishing to begin and continue their Gaisce journey.
41	Yes. If the candidate is committed and enthusiastic about the achievement and comes to me for advice or if a candidate has lost their enthusiasm, it is great to be able to discuss the situation with them and re-motivate them. However, if the participant isn't really committed in the first place and just signed up without any real conviction, it is difficult to make a positive difference.	85	Yes, [it] helps kids problem solve, be independent, teamwork, plan and not be mollycoddled, and I put the work on them to complete [and] not me do[ing] it for them.
43	Yes, they need someone to keep reminding them to keep going and to just apply for it.	86	Yes, I encourage them out of their comfort zone and support them to see their Gaisce Award through to the end.
47	Yes, because I can help them decide on areas to work on and encourage them to continue.	87	Definitely, as one can influence and inspire them to think outside the box if challenged for ideas as what to do when they experience a major challenge in continuing or finishing up.
48	Yes, by motivating and encouraging.		
49	Yes.		
51	Yes. They see me getting stuck in with a smile.		
53	Yes, purely as a safety net to say, 'Yes, go challenge yourself... I'll be here.' To motivate and help them discover how strong and determined they are.		
54	Yes, students develop mentally as well as emotionally by seeing a project and make connections with people in the community.		
55	Yes, I feel I allow confidence to grow.		
57	Yes.		

## Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participants?

### Responses: I hope, or I think I do.

- 20 I really hope I do. I feel [I do] at the end of the year through what participants say and seeing their faces as they receive their certificates and medals.
- 21 I hope so.
- 22 I hope so.
- 32 I hope so; they come regularly to ask questions about what they are doing or look for assistance.
- 35 I think I do. The students all see me as someone who is very involved in our school community and their local community, even though I don't live there. They see the importance I put on getting them involved and giving them opportunities to discover things that could make them happy or give them a sense of purpose. I love getting students to set their goals for the year in Gaisce and seeing that they don't have to be just dreams but opportunities. 'Chase the dream, not the competition' – there is no competition in Gaisce except the competition with yourself to get it completed.
- 38 I hope so, yes... I think I do.
- 39 I hope so!
- 40 I hope so.
- 45 I would like to think so!
- 46 I hope so.
- 56 I hope I offer encouragement.
- 59 I'd like to think so! It's always lovely to foster a positive pastoral role in students' lives, and Gaisce allows us to do that. It's always a talking point between myself and senior cycle students who take part in the programme.
- 62 I hope so. I offer support to students and am there to answer questions and queries [and] check in.
- 63 I hope so. The Adventure project is one of [the] students' most fond memories of their time at school.
- 65 I would hope so. Many would not have taken up the challenge nor completed it without me. Many would :) Some take up the challenge and then lose interest.  
During my time, I have co-ordinated Gaisce projects in Romania and three in Zambia (building a school and pre-school). That has certainly had an impact on the pupils who came on those trips, and perhaps on pupils who helped [with the] fundraiser.
- 68 I hope so.
- 70 I hope so... not so for the accolade, but to make them more confident as individuals and community members.
- 76 I think I do! The Gaisce programme I developed was one where students worked towards their end goal! I have taught them that achieving something doesn't mean you can either do it or not, but it's the progressive development towards the goal! This is ultimately a skill they can carry through in their lives
- 77 I hope I did.
- 82 I hope so.

### Response: No/Not Sure/Other.

- 17 No.
- 25 I think I enable the process, gently cajole when needed and recognize the achievements.
- 30 They seem to need support and affirmation, so I try to give both.
- 31 I have set it up in the school. I inform the TY students and parents about it. I organise the Adventure Journey. I see being a PAL as an integral part of my role as Programme Co-ordinator.
- 36 Not sure.
- 44 The programme certainly makes a difference to the participants.
- 52 Not particularly.
- 64 I don't know – I think they see it as a thing to do in TY.
- 69 I don't know. I am there for them as support should they need it

## What do you enjoy most about being a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Seeing students achieve and develop.

- 6 Seeing students achieve.  
27 I find it very rewarding.  
36 Participants just achieving a goal, the simple joy of it, when the goal is something they want.  
37 Satisfaction at seeing the results achieved by the students.  
40 Seeing participants achieve things that they may not have done had they not done Gaisce.  
41 Seeing students commit to something and earning a sense of achievement; encourage[ing] students to become involved in the community.  
44 Seeing the students receive their awards.  
53 The chance to be part of promoting and validating student growth outside the classroom.  
54 The different aspects – I think they prepare you well for life.  
70 To witness the way participation in Gaisce empowers young people; to hear them say, after their expedition, that they discovered resources in themselves they never knew they had at all makes the effort to go on as a Gaisce PAL worthwhile!  
71 Watching the kids achieve their goals.  
72 Watching the students grow throughout the Gaisce journey from start to finish.  
73 Watching the young people enjoy a sense of achievement and overcoming barriers which were once in their way! I bring a motto of ‘no limits’ to the programme, and it’s satisfying to see the young people start to believe in that and their ability to achieve anything with a good attitude and a willingness to put the work into something.  
74 When I get to present the awards and call out specifically to all in the audience what each student did to earn it.  
75 When it’s finished and ‘most’ of them get through it!  
76 When participants receive their awards and the pride they experience in themselves and [the] development of their self-confidence.  
77 [When students use their own initiative and try new things, e.g. learning to cook or play a musical instrument.](#)  
78 Witnessing and assisting with the personal development of young people.  
79 [Witnessing the development of young people.](#)

### Responses: A different relationship outside the classroom.

- 1 Relating to the students on a different level.  
16 [Building relationships with students and seeing them in a different light.](#)  
20 Engaging with the girls and with Sharon, the other PAL at school.  
21 Getting involved in activities with young people outside of a classroom environment.  
22 Getting to know the students outside of their subjects.  
30 Interacting with the students and the community placements.  
31 Interaction and [a] sense of satisfaction.  
32 It allows me to work with my students in a different way and get to know students I do not usually work with.  
38 Seeing a different side to the students.  
39 Seeing [an]other side to students.  
43 Seeing the kids outside a classroom.  
45 Student interaction.  
46 Student work.  
47 Students see that I’m not just management in charge of discipline. They know I treat them all equally, but they get to see it. They see I may struggle at times, especially with IT, but I ask them for help [and] they love that.  
55 The different positive relationships you can foster with your pupils outside of the classroom and the Adventure programme.  
57 The interaction with students.  
59 The interaction with young people.  
60 The collaboration between the student and the teacher.  
63 The relationship between PAL and participants.  
64 [The relationship it fosters within the group.](#)  
65 The students.  
66 [The time with the young people.](#)  
68 Time with students [and] their energy.  
80 Working and being with young people and the friendship of Gaisce PALs.  
81 Working with highly motivated participants.  
82 Working with students outside the classroom.  
83 Working with TY students.

## What do you enjoy most about being a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: Helping/guiding/motivating.

- 8 Motivating students to challenge themselves and grow and mature as a result.
- 14 Being able to guide students and help students. It is rewarding to help [them] on their journey.
- 15 Being able to help students... reading their entries and seeing them receive their award [and] a sense of achievement.
- 18 [Developing leadership capacity of others.](#)
- 19 Empowering the students with new opportunities and challenges to enhance their life skills.
- 23 Helping students reach their potential in a non-academic area.
- 25 I believe in the award, and I am so proud to help students achieve it.
- 34 Motivating my students.
- 35 Motivating participants to get up and get something new or view what they do in their spare time as valuable [and] worth improving.

### Responses: Other challenges and observations.

- 26 I enjoy the fact that it is something the students do in their own time. I check in with them and their parents. Perhaps I should be a more hands-on PAL but being TY Co-ordinator is inordinately busy. If being a PAL were very onerous, I could no longer do it. Also, all teachers are extraordinarily busy with CBAs at junior cycle. I couldn't see too many volunteering for the role in my school.
- 33 It's a challenge.
- 69 To be honest, I don't really get anything out of it.

## What do you enjoy most about being a Gaisce PAL?

### Responses: The Adventure Journey and accomplishment.

- 11 Adventure Journey.
- 12 The Adventure Journey has been interesting.
- 13 Assisting the students with getting the award, seeing the sense of accomplishment when they finish the Adventure challenge.
- 17 Building relationships with young people and seeing them succeed in a challenge, especially the Adventure... pride in their own achievements.
- 24 Hike! To see how so many students are in awe of what they have completed in such a short space of time.
- 28 I most enjoy the sense of achievement and pride I get having supported a student to get their award, and also the sense of pride gained following the accomplishment of their Adventure Journey or the development of a new skill or from their involvement in the community.
- 29 I really like to see the students complete the Adventure Journey at the end of their Gaisce experience.
- 42 Seeing the excitement of the students when they tell stories about their journey.
- 48 The Adventure Journeys.
- 49 The Adventure Journey and the students updating me on their new skills.
- 50 The Adventure Journey is always so fab. Students really build a rapport with their peers and staff, and it is always wonderful to see students enjoying the outdoors.
- 51 The Adventure Journey with the students.
- 52 The Adventure project and those that complete it.
- 56 The fulfilment experienced by the participants on completing the challenges. They especially love the Adventure Journey.
- 58 The interaction with the student that is not about academia, and the annual Adventure Journey.
- 61 The overnight stay is great craic.
- 62 The overnight trip: cooking, chatting, Frisbee throwing, [and] singing, [with] no technology.
- 67 The [Ad]venture Journey and some of the great projects the students get involved in and then stay connected with.

## Are there any challenges you experienced in your role as a PAL?

### Responses: Time challenges and busy school schedules.

1	It is a very busy role, managing such a large group of students and making sure that they are all on track throughout the year.	82	Time in school.
18	Time and lack of support from school management who can even take over [from] me at times and make decision without consulting me as the PAL.	85	<a href="#">Time, but that's the same for everyone.</a>
21	Getting time to meet with students.	86	Getting the proper time to work with the young people overseeing the completion of the Gaisce award for the young people who have signed up.
23	My school position is extremely busy. As a single deputy school, I do not have the time to fully engage with students on the level I would prefer.	87	We have so many students doing it that it requires a huge amount of organisation. Also, [the] pressure of having a shorter lunch hour due to a school week of 4.5 days instead of 5 days.
25	Time to engage on a one-on-one level.		
26	Time.		
29	No time!		
35	When the numbers are very large, it is difficult keeping track [of] all the students while also teaching my daily classes, etc. [Also], not having a designated time on my timetable to meet with the students can be very difficult.		
36	Time to keep up to date with pupils.		
38	Yes, time to organise Gaisce-related administration.		
39	Time constraints with such a busy school schedule.		
41	Yes, motivating students to do the community involvement aspect of the award and to record it properly. It is also a challenge motivating those who lose interest during the year. Time restraints are always a challenging factor.		
45	Time constraints to meet the students.		
47	Time in addition to working in a school/chasing after students for forms, etc.		
50	Time to meet with students.		
56	Finding time to devote to the role.		
57	Time.		
61	Time is a huge problem for me! I also can't do the trip for health reasons, and I find it hard to get people to volunteer.		
63	It is time consuming to encourage students to get involved. It might help if a speaker visited schools and recommended it before I try to get them involved.		
64	<a href="#">Not enough time or in-house recognition for the task by students, parents or teachers.</a>		
69	Keeping young people motivated to keep doing Gaisce, organising the Adventure Journey safely [and] getting time to support students more fully.		
70	Time constraints/demands in other areas at school with new courses!		
75	Time to encourage and get feedback.		
79	Time.		
80	Difficult to speak to and hear everyone each week.		
81	Bureaucracy and time.		

## Are there any challenges you experienced in your role as a PAL?

### Responses: Student participation and motivation challenges.

- 11 For us, the challenge is promotion and getting more students involved, but Gaisce is in its infancy in KCC, so I'm sure, over a few more years, we will see an increase in numbers and awards.
- 12 [Keeping them motivated.](#)
- 13 [Motivating students.](#)
- 17 Identifying eligible activities the students can do.
- 19 Student participation.
- 30 Trying to keep students engaged.
- 32 Helping students to find activities in the community and skill area[s] when they live in a rural setting; motivating students at the start of the year to get involved in the programme.
- 37 Sometimes, students get a little passive about the award. The concept of an hour a week is not a lot, but complacency sometimes takes over.
- 40 The amount who drop out.
- 43 Keeping them on track.
- 54 Getting students to maintain the tasks over a prolonged period and plan in advance as it can fail due to time constraints if not planned out.
- 68 Keeping students on track.
- 69 Keeping young people motivated to keep doing Gaisce, organising the Adventure Journey safely [and] getting time to support students more fully.
- 71 Getting participant started on their Journey, ideas for the various elements [and] getting students to invest in and see the benefits of the programme.
- 72 There are always challenges – it is difficult when a student signs up and then starts to ‘drag their feet’ – it can be a challenge if you cannot sign them off at the end of the year.
- 73 Yes, getting students to finish the award!!
- 76 Keeping some participants motivated to continue the award when the support may not be at home to do so.
- 83 The biggest challenge is trying to keep the students motivated to continue with the award and with their ongoing commitment. They start off very enthusiastically, but this can often dwindle or even lapse. I think parents are not informed enough despite being given the literature, etc. by me. Perhaps a special video for parents as well as for students could be developed that PALs could email/text to parties to view, and/or a reminder could be sent to parents/students to continue to engage.

### Responses: Administration and payments challenges.

- 8 The payment system; however, this is not due to Gaisce [but] an overhaul of the school system.
- 27 Students are reluctant to pay the registration fee as they don't totally understand the process yet despite me explaining, using online tools and even older participants as guest speakers.
- 51 Pupils not registering properly and on time.
- 52 Chasing students to sign off on hours, getting them to update forms properly, [and] having to oversee it all myself.
- 58 Tracking some students down to check their weekly progress.
- 59 The student paperwork is hard; the online portal could be used to record the weekly activities rather than [on] paper.
- 60 Getting students to complete their diaries can be very time consuming and tedious; [the] Adventure Journey.

### Responses: Adventure Journey challenges.

- 22 Issues with management when organising trips.
- 33 I find the Adventure Journey a challenge as I now have big family commitments.
- 65 Sometimes, if pupils can't start all three immediately, they slip by... some start off and [then] wane. Having to go on the hike is not attractive to me anymore. I'm kind of past wanting to give up a whole weekend, but there are not many people willing to volunteer. It's a huge commitment.
- 67 I find it difficult when some participants try and get the medal when they don't deserve it. I find the Adventure Journey difficult now as I myself have three children, so the weekend away is difficult.
- 69 Keeping young people motivated to keep doing Gaisce, organising the Adventure Journey safely [and] getting time to support students more fully.

## Are there any challenges you experienced in your role as a PAL?

### Responses: Community and Covid-19 challenges.

- 16 [The] community element of the award in rural areas.  
24 Social distancing at the moment, but the students are finding ways to still engage in their activities to the best of their abilities.  
44 Not so far this year, apart from Covid-19.  
49 Thanking community placement facilitators in a meaningful way after years of helping the school with placements.  
77 Covid-19, and therefore no personal contact with students, as well as the cancellation of the Adventure Journey.

### Responses: Integrity Award challenges.


- 53 Personally, a lack of cooperation from the other PALs... We have different acceptable standards of completion.  
67 I find it difficult when some participants try and get the medal when they don't deserve it. I find the Adventure Journey difficult now as I myself have three children, so the weekend away is difficult.

### Responses: No issues expressed.

- 20 No.  
31 I find it okay. I check in on the website every so often.  
48 None.  
74 External influences [have] been cool.  
78 No.

## In your role as a Gaisce PAL, who values you?

### Responses: Students (current and past).

1	School management, parents, students and the Gaisce organisation also.	48	Gaisce  and my participants.
6	The students.	49	Students, school management and parents of awardees.
8	Gaisce, students past and present, parents and school management.	51	Me, my students, the local old-folk's home and after-school clubs.
11	School, outside Gaisce teams and the Gaisce participants.	53	The young people.
12	<a href="#">The students.</a>	54	The students.
14	The participants.	55	Students in management.
18	<a href="#">Colleagues, the students and parents.</a>	57	Students.
20	The participants and students.	58	Students and their parents.
21	The TY Co-ordinator, parents and TY students.	59	Students [and] management, to a certain extent.
22	The students [and] fellow PALs.	61	The students and Gaisce.
23	I would hope the students do and their parents/guardians. Teaching staff would normally comment on the maturity of the TY group when they enter Fifth Year. I believe that Gaisce plays an important role in their development.	63	The students.
25	Students, management, TY Co-ordinators and Gaisce officials.	66	School management, students of TY and their parents.
26	The students' TY Co-ordinator.	67	My participants (hopefully!).
27	My principal, parents and students.	68	The students, I hope.
28	Students and the school.	69	Participants, I suppose [and] Gaisce.
29	Participants that follow through with a goal.	70	Me, Mary Yore, The Gaisce team, [and] the students I support.
30	The students and, if they complete the programme, the parents.	71	Gaisce organisation, school management, parent/guardian [and] students.
32	Some students [and] Gaisce, hopefully.	73	The conscientious students.
33	The students, the staff and [the] principal.	74	Students.
34	My principal and my students.	75	The students who are very motivated.
35	I hope the students.	76	School management, PAL team, [and] Gaisce students.
36	My students.	77	<a href="#">TY Co-ordinator and students.</a>
37	I'm not sure, [to be] 100% honest. From time to time, especially after an awards ceremony in the school, I've had a moment where a student has thanked me and beamed with delight. That's when I know I've helped. That's when I feel valued.	81	Three Gold awardees.
38	The students, parents and management, I hope!	82	The students.
39	I would hope the school, students and [the] wider community.	83	A minority of the participants who complete the award probably value me. I'm not sure how valued I am in my role as a Gaisce PAL as I feel it is subsumed into my role as TY Year Head and Co-ordinator of Programme in my school, so it is not differentiated.
41	The candidate and the organisation.	84	Students and school.
42	The participants and the other PALs.	85	<a href="#">The kids... I do it for them.</a>
44	Objectively, you would understand that the participants, their parents, the programme co-ordinator and our senior management do.	86	The school authority [and] the Gaisce students.
45	The participants.	87	Other PALs and the participants.
46	Gaisce, the participants, parents/guardians, school management [and] community groups they benefit.		
47	Students.		

## In your role as a Gaisce PAL, who values you?

### Responses: School management, school, and principal.

- 1 School management, parents, students and the Gaisce organisation.  
8 Gaisce, students past and present, parents and school management.  
11 School, our Gaisce teams and the Gaisce participants.  
25 Students, management, TY Co-ordinators [and] Gaisce officials.  
27 My principal, parents and students.  
28 Students and the school.  
33 The students, the staff and [the] principal.  
34 My principal and my students.  
38 The students, parents and management, I hope!  
39 I would hope the school, students and wider community.  
40 The school.  
44 Objectively, you would understand that the participants, their parents, the programme co-ordinator and our senior management do.  
46 Gaisce, the participants, parents/guardians, school management [and] community groups they benefit.  
49 Students, school management and parents of awardees  
52 The school management, who just wants a person to look after it so that it can continue to be offered.  
55 Students and management.  
59 Students [and] management, to a certain extent.  
65 Hmmm. I'm not sure anyone does. Society is such that people often take what you do for granted. I think often people assume you are doing it as a paid job, and therefore it's just done.  
The headmaster appreciated the job I do.  
66 School management [and] students of TY and their parents.  
71 Gaisce organisation, school management, parents/guardians [and] students.  
75 The students who are very motivated.  
76 School management, [the] PAL team [and] Gaisce students.  
78 School management.  
80 My colleague Maura, who has been assisting me, [and] the principal, in that he'd like to see students complete Gaisce.  
84 Students and the school.  
86 The school authority [and] the Gaisce students.

### Responses: Colleagues and fellow PALs.


- 18 Colleagues, the students and parents.  
21 The TY Co-ordinator, parents and TY students.  
22 The students [and] fellow PALs.  
23 I would hope the students do and their parents/guardians. Teaching staff would normally comment on the maturity of the TY group when they enter Fifth Year. I believe that Gaisce plays an important role in their development.  
25 Students, management, TY Co-ordinators [and] Gaisce officials.  
26 The students TY Co-ordinator.  
33 The students, the staff and [the] principal.  
42 The participants and the other PALs.  
44 Objectively, you would understand that the participants, their parents, the programme co-ordinator and our senior management do.  
66 School management. students of TY and their parents.  
77 TY Co-ordinator and students.  
80 My colleague Maura, who has been assisting me, [and] the principal, in that he'd like to see students complete Gaisce.  
87 Other PALs and the participants.

## In your role as a Gaisce PAL, who values you?

### Responses: Parents or Guardians.

- 1 School management, parents, students and the Gaisce organisation also.  
8 Gaisce, students past and present, parents and school management.  
18 [Colleagues, the students and parents.](#)  
21 The TY Co-ordinator, parents and TY students.  
23 I would hope the students do and their parents/guardians. Teaching staff would normally comment on the maturity of the TY group when they enter Fifth Year. I believe that Gaisce plays an important role in their development.  
27 My principal, parents and students.  
30 The students and, if they complete the programme, the parents.  
38 The students, parents and management, I hope!  
44 Objectively, you would understand that the participants, their parents, the programme co-ordinator and our senior management do.  
46 Gaisce, the participants, parents/guardians, school management [and] community groups they benefit.  
49 Students, school management and parents of awardees.  
71 Gaisce organisation, school management, parent/guardian [and] students.

### Responses: Gaisce organisation and staff.

- 1 School management, parents, students and the Gaisce organisation also.  
8 Gaisce, students past and present, parents and school management.  
11 School, our Gaisce teams and the Gaisce participants.  
23 I would hope the students do and their parents/guardians. Teaching staff would normally comment on the maturity of the TY group when they enter Fifth Year. I believe that Gaisce plays an important role in their development.  
25 Students management, TY Co-ordinators [and] Gaisce officials.  
32 Some students [and] Gaisce, hopefully.  
41 The candidate and the organisation.  
46 Gaisce, the participants, parents/guardians, school management [and] community groups they benefit.  
48 Gaisce  and my participants.  
61 The students and Gaisce.  
68 The students, I hope.  
70 Me, Mary Yore, The Gaisce team, [and] the students I support.  
71 Gaisce organisation, school management, parent/guardian [and] students.  
76 School management, [the] PAL team [and] Gaisce students.

## In your role as a Gaisce PAL, who values you?

### Responses: Not Sure/Nobody.

- 17 No one?
- 19 Not sure.
- 31 I have no idea. I don't really understand the question.
- 37 I'm not sure, [to be] 100% honest. From time to time, especially after an awards ceremony in the school, I've had a moment where a student has thanked me and beamed with delight. That's when I know I've helped. That's when I feel valued.
- 43 Not really sure?
- 60 Probably no one.
- 64 *Not many.*
- 65 Hmmm. I'm not sure anyone does. Society is such that people often take what you do for granted. I think often people assume you are doing it as a paid job, and therefore it's just done. The headmaster appreciated the job I do.

### Responses: Wider community.

- 39 I would hope the school, students and [the] wider community.
- 46 Gaisce, the participants, parents/guardians, school management [and] community groups they benefit.
- 51 Me, my students, the local old-folk's home and after-school clubs.

## Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?

### Responses: Improved systems.

- 23 More posters that I can print for publicity [and] more worksheets, preferably online for Gaisce participants, with deadlines. Going to [a] central location [and] not in-house... students lose value when everything is in-house.
- 25 I think Gaisce has very good processes and resources in place, and the regional development officer in our area is really proactive and helpful. I think a big area for improvement could be the quality of the online portal diary for students and teachers. I think the interface could be developed to make it quicker, less clunky and more interactive (is there an app developed for diary entries) to promote multimedia reflective of their own experience with smartphones/social media. It would also make the PAL interaction with supervisors/pro-forma gathering easier. I use a programme called Managebac for a subject called CAS for the IB system, and students like it.
- 29 Making leaders aware of initiatives that are out there, old and new, that they can tap into. As many options as possible within all categories. A brief introduction with a link for detail or contacts. Ideas database with options that are running that year.
- 48 Guest speakers and contacting participants by email, e.g. newsletters.
- 51 The booklets were easier to manage than the website.
- 60 Website is very fiddly; [it] could be streamlined.
- 63 The webpage isn't very user-friendly. I find it hard to find the lists I need.
- 64 [Remove the short time between online registration and payment demands. We pay in bulk and students get emails to say they haven't paid \[and\] will be removed. It takes time to get this all done.](#)
- 69 Make the site easier to manage. Provide more information on Adventure Journeys and how to do them at a low cost.
- 81 Name applications easier and cheap and completion less complicated. Send medals on time.
- 82 The website can be difficult for PALs to view information easily.

### Responses: Training and support.

- 1 By offering further training and support in order to enable me to progress candidates to the Silver and Gold Award.
- 31 More training.
- 32 More communication with PALs [and] more online training.
- 38 I feel supported by the Gaisce organisation... perhaps the option for training refresher courses or other events to link in with other PALs – this would help with maintaining motivation.
- 44 Some CPD, during the year, to keep us up to date.
- 54 Guidance. I'm getting students to take ownership in projects and to see out what they've started
- 56 More training.

### Responses: PAL events and network support.

- 8 [A] national PAL event would be beneficial, with guest speakers, etc. A different experience.
- 14 Access to ideas and the experience of other people.
- 29 Making leaders aware of initiatives that are out there, old and new, that they can tap into. As many options as possible within all categories. A brief introduction with a link for detail or contacts. Ideas database with options that are running that year.
- 32 More communication with PALs [and] more online training.
- 38 I feel supported by the Gaisce organisation... perhaps the option for training refresher courses or other events to link in with other PALs – this would help with maintaining motivation.
- 71 PAL events.
- 85 [List of organisations in the region that might be useful, like scouts, bike hire places, etc.](#)

## Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?

### Responses: Satisfied with current level of support.

- 11 Overall, happy with support to date.  
20 I feel it is great. If I ever have a question, I ring Gaisce, and everyone is more than happy to go above and beyond to help you and answer your question.  
21 You do a great job already.  
30 Just ongoing advice. I think they do a good job anyway.  
37 I genuinely believe that the support that is given to PALs is second to none. Particularly during Covid-19, I can honestly say that there has been great encouragement and support from the team.  
38 I feel supported by the Gaisce organisation... perhaps the option for training refresher courses or other events to link in with other PALs [...] would help with maintaining motivation.  
46 Not at this time.  
62 It's very satisfying... a lot of support offered by Gaisce if any queries, etc.  
70 I am happy that Gaisce and Mary Yore communicate regularly with me and keep me informed about activities, etc. throughout the year.  
74 I'm happy with how I'm helped by Gaisce.  
76 Continue the way they are going! Such a fantastic experience for both the participants and PALs.  
77 [Support from Gaisce has been outstanding.](#)  
78 None.  
80 Continue with people like Paul visiting schools and the excellent aid in the office – so supportive and patient.  
83 I am satisfied with the experience afforded me so far. I rely most heavily on the service provided by the office if I ring with a query, and that service is most helpful to be honest.  
84 I have been involved in Gaisce for many years now, and I am very happy with my experience of being a PAL.  
86 Continue with the ongoing support, updates and PAL liaison officer.

### Responses: Visits by Gaisce personnel.

- 16 [Visits by Gaisce representatives to schools.](#)  
36 Help with initial set-up in school. Speak to students. A fresh voice goes a long way.  
41 I would like [it] if members of the Gaisce team could visit the school at the beginning of the year to motivate the students and maybe do a day or half-day workshop with them. It would be a great support.  
48 Guest speakers and contacting participants by email, e.g. newsletters.  
68 More frequent personal contact.  
73 All the contact from the Development Officers I find very helpful, thankfully.  
80 Continue with people like Paul visiting schools and the excellent aid in the office – so supportive and patient.  
86 Continue with the ongoing support, updates and PAL liaison officer.  
87 Keep in touch... Stephen Peers or Marian used to call once a year, and it was great/inspiring.

## Is there any one thing that would improve your experience of delivering Gaisce?

### Responses: Adventure Journey help.

- 61 Help with organising the trip.
- 65 Our hillwalking leader (Mountain Leader qualified) recently retired from the school after organising independent wild camping Gaisce ventures and overseas summer hikes for 25 years  
We are at a loss now. The Adventure Centre [is] far too expensive and very bland. Perhaps Gaisce could have a team of hill walkers who could lead ventures. There are plenty of retired active hill walkers out there who could be 'employed'. Insurance is the issue. When I enquired recently, I was told we needed a qualified leader to take the pupils on a canal walk. This is ridiculous – a hindering factor in my opinion.
- 69 Make the site easier to manage [and] provide more information on Adventure Journeys and how to do them at a low cost.

### Responses: Other.

- 17 Sometimes, it feels like more of a burden than a reward being involved – it is stressful keeping on top of the students, giving them ideas, [and] keeping track of them.
- 19 Don't know.
- 26 Give acknowledgement by way of certification/ceremony for the number of applicants we have supervised over the years.
- 33 It gives you a sense of achievement that you have helped others work towards a goal. This is satisfying.
- 39 You grow with the people you work with, meet the challenges and prepare accordingly for the next group. You need to be very fluid and go with whatever situation you encounter.
- 43 I would like to see the awards ceremony being reinstated.
- 67 Rewards for PALs.

## Can you suggest any additional training that you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?

### Responses: Training for Adventure Journey and safeguarding.

- 1 The Adventure Journey.  
23 Motivation of students; student independent thinking/planning (I firmly believe that many young people need to take more ownership of their Gaisce participation, and there possibly should be some weighting towards it). GDPR re: media/photos and use [and] child protection, especially on the Adventure Journey.  
32 Organising the Adventure Challenge, health/safety/insurance [and] alternatives to the programme like what has happened with schools being closed.  
35 Set-up [and] support during the Gaisce Journey.  
47 Adventure Journey/voluntary activities.  
58 Adventure Journey.  
61 Support to help the students with the community involvement and help with the trip.  
63 Encouraging others to get involved. Other Adventure projects that are not too expensive.  
69 More information on the Adventure Journey, insurance and logistics.  
71 Exploring options for the various challenges (Skill, Adventure, Community [and] Physical). Motivating young people and looking after wellbeing. Links with other organisations.  
84 Options for Adventure ([in the] current climate) [and] encouraging student participation.  
85 [Child protection, safety issues \[and\] first aid.](#)  
86 Managing the personal challenges, keeping the students engaged with Gaisce in order to fully complete it [and] the Adventure activity health and safety.

### Responses: Training for improved administration and online engagement.

- 8 A refresher course for current PALs, just to brush up on the basics again.  
23 Motivation of students; student independent thinking/planning (I firmly believe that many young people need to take more ownership of their Gaisce participation, and there possibly should be some weighting towards it). GDPR re: media/photos and use [and] child protection, especially on the Adventure Journey.  
25 Managing vetting for students and ethical volunteer processes. Using reflection techniques in classroom regarding Gaisce.  
64 [How to improve online management of students. This was planned and was not initially ideal, but I believe would work going forward.](#)  
72 Skills – this can be an issue – often involving payment by participant [...] can therefore prohibit them from taking part. Clarification would help new PALs.  
73 The invoice part.  
76 The electronic managing system for the systems! Can be tricky to begin with.  
82 Motivation and organising records.

## Can you suggest any additional training that you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?

### Responses: Ideas and sharing hub resource training.

- 11 Ideas outside the everyday for each of the four sections. Clips from students promoting Gaisce so [that] it is not staff doing this. We do use students who have finished the award, but alternatives would be nice.
- 17 More ideas of areas to do the categories in; DEIS students can't afford to join classes, etc., so I often need to think outside the box. A lot of things happen in the home for them – working outside is not an option.
- 29 A brief view of all the possibilities within each category, just to give ideas, not an in-depth view of any (some just don't work for you or don't suit your situation, and you might have to listen through a talk on it for 15 minutes, and you just zone out).
- 36 Ideas for storing evidence of activities.
- 37 Would love some more suggestions about the community engagement. A lot of my students tend to stay within the school community or their local youth club or church. I'd love some more social outreach.
- 38 Advice on activities students can participate in [and] links to organisations for Adventure Journeys.
- 41 Ways to fulfil the community involvement aspect of the award. My students find this [to be] the most difficult as they are in a rural setting and transport and access can be a problem. This is the area in which they are least motivated.
- 45 More examples of ideas in action. Motivation for students who work outside school hours. Trying to fit them all in with regard [to] school work, study, work [and] extracurricular [activities], etc.
- 48 Activity ideas.
- 49 Detail about how to help students learning a new skill on their own online [and] how to assess and celebrate all the students new skills at the end of the year.
- 55 Ideas for areas for students to pursue.
- 62 Specific low-cost skills.
- 71 Exploring options for the various challenges (Skill, Adventure, Community [and] Physical). Motivating young people and looking after wellbeing. Links with other organisations.
- 74 Ideas.
- 75 Personal skills that are not sporting.
- 78 Activities that contribute/do not contribute to Gaisce.

### Responses: Youth development and leadership programmes for young people.

- 12 [Leadership for young people.](#)
- 23 Motivation of students; student independent thinking/planning (I firmly believe that many young people need to take more ownership of their Gaisce participation, and there possibly should be some weighting towards it). GDPR re: media/photos and use [and] child protection, especially on the Adventure Journey.
- 25 Managing vetting for students and ethical volunteer processes. Using reflection techniques in classroom regarding Gaisce.
- 33 Resilience, giving back to [the] community, being part of a group [and] feeling you belong.
- 44 Goal setting. Participants embark on their activities from differing starting points. It would be great to get some training in goal setting so each participant can make the most of the programme.
- 45 More examples of ideas in action. Motivation for students who work outside school hours. Trying to fit them all in with regard [to] school work, study, work [and] extracurricular [activities], etc.

## Can you suggest any additional training that you would like to be offered to enhance your skills as a PAL?

### Responses: Motivational engagement programmes for young people.

- 21 Engaging with students.  
23 Motivation of students; student independent thinking/planning (I firmly believe that many young people need to take more ownership of their Gaisce participation, and there possibly should be some weighting towards it). GDPR re: media/photos and use [and] child protection, especially on the Adventure Journey.  
30 Keeping students interested and motivated re: finishing the programme.  
31 Motivating the students [and] the benefits of volunteering; health and fitness.  
45 More examples of ideas in action. Motivation for students who work outside school hours. Trying to fit them all in with regard [to] school work, study, work [and] extracurricular [activities], etc.  
51 How to increase the self-esteem of teenagers.  
63 Encouraging others to get involved. Other Adventure projects that are not too expensive.  
68 Motivation of students to stay on track.  
71 Exploring options for the various challenges (Skill, Adventure, Community [and] Physical). Motivating young people and looking after wellbeing. Links with other organisations.  
80 Being a support to students as participants.  
82 Motivation and organising records.  
84 Options for Adventure ([in the] current climate) [and] encouraging student participation.  
86 Managing the personal challenges, keeping the students engaged with Gaisce in order to fully complete it, [and] the Adventure activity health and safety.

### Responses: Community outreach training programmes.

- 37 Would love some more suggestions about community engagement. A lot of my students tend to stay within the school community or their local youth club or church. I'd love some more social outreach.  
38 Advice on activities students can participate in [and] links to organisations for Adventure Journeys.  
41 Ways to fulfil the community involvement aspect of the award. My students find this [to be] the most difficult [part] as they are in a rural setting and transport and access can be a problem. This is the area in which they are least motivated.  
60 Community involvement.  
61 Support to help the students with the community involvement and help with the trip.  
71 Exploring options for the various challenges (Skill, Adventure, Community [and] Physical). Motivating young people and looking after wellbeing. Links with other organisations.

### Responses: Suggestions other.

- 19 Engagement and expectations of parents.  
26 None.  
79 Wellbeing.  
81 Once you're up and running, you don't need too many tutorials... [you] don't have time. [They're] needed for new PALs only. Don't complicate things and add to our workload.

## What do you believe prevents participants' progression to a Silver Award?

### Responses: Academic and time demands.

- 6 Exam pressure.
- 8 We tried to offer Silver in previous years; however, the students were in Sixth Year, and time within the school year was a major issue.
- 18 [Time to engage students and lack of enthusiasm and motivation by students.](#)
- 20 We focus on TYs; once they hit Fifth Year, they are too busy concentrating on studies to complete Silver.
- 30 This is offered in TY when students have time to complete all challenges.
- 35 Time and volunteers to help PAL facilitate it.
- 39 Lack of time and support dedicated to the awards outside TY.
- 43 Finding the time with willing supervisors to go away. It involves two nights, and it is difficult to get people to give up the whole weekend.
- 44 Timetabling and class contact hours with students who may wish to progress.
- 45 Time constraints [and] numbers.
- 47 Most students complete Bronze in TY, so [they] have less time when they move on to Fifth Year to complete Silver.
- 62 Time commitment; generally, the stronger student focuses on education come Fifth Year [while] others can be intimidated by what is required of them.
- 66 [Students progressing into Fifth Year, \[so\] less time on \[their\] hands \[and\] not enough teachers to support it.](#)
- 70 We offer Bronze in TY and find that most students don't progress to Silver in Fifth Year due to school leaving certificate pressures.
- 71 Students only starting their Gaisce Journey in senior year.
- 72 Students believe it may take up too much time at senior cycle, and occasionally the two day hike can prohibit some!
- 73 Time.
- 77 Timeframe for TY.

### Responses: Adventure support needed.

- 1 As a PAL, I would require further training in order to enable students to progress to the Silver or Gold Award. Given the litigious society in which we live, I would need to have the ML (Mountain Leader) qualification in order to take students into the mountains.
- 24 Supervision for more than one night is difficult.
- 33 The Adventure Journey being supervised.
- 35 Time and volunteers to help PAL facilitate it.
- 40 We don't have time to do a three-day challenge at the end.
- 43 Finding the time with willing supervisors to go away. It involves two nights, and it is difficult to get people to give up the whole weekend.
- 51 Very few take part in Silver Gaisce... Two overnights, a lot of country children in a town school means getting home late and in the dark; difficult for community involvement.
- 52 I am the only Gaisce PAL in the school and am too busy with my job to go beyond Bronze. If students want to do Silver, we accommodate them but cannot provide the Adventure Journey.

## What do you believe prevents participants' progression to a Silver Award?

### Responses: New/Not offered in school/Focus on Bronze Award.

- 11 Gaisce is relatively new to KCC, so we want to establish the Bronze Award fully and embed practice and raise profile before venturing into the world of Silver. We would support students who wanted to continue to Silver, but [we] don't advertise this.
- 14 We have offered Silver and Gold and still have some Gold participants. I am only involved with these students and now think that the Silver and Gold may not be available.
- 31 Students do the Bronze on a voluntary basis as part of TY.
- 41 Silver Award is not run in the school.
- 58 I know there is another Gaisce mentor in our school, but our school had not been active for a few years, so we started again this year.
- 75 No system organised in school. TY-based only.
- 80 As this [is] our first year, we have just completed Bronze with 20 candidates. Some of those are interested in doing the Silver in the next academic year.

### Responses: Lack of motivation.

- 18 Time to engage students and a lack of enthusiasm and motivation by students.
- 27 Enthusiasm and registration fee.

### Responses: Lack of staff or advocates.

- 17 There is nobody to push them and encourage them to continue on.
- 55 Staff levels.
- 66 Students progressing into Fifth Year, [so] less time on [their] hands [and] not enough teachers to support it.

### Responses: Other reasons.

- 26 Don't know this is possible.
- 27 Enthusiasm and registration fee.

Since 22 March, Gaisce has been running ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This campaign encourages participants to continue their Gaisce Award and/or young people to sign up for the Gaisce Award during this time. If you have any insights or observations of ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ on the campaign, please share your experience below:

**Responses: Positive comments about the ‘Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ programme.**

1 I think that Gaisce have adapted well to the challenging times of Covid-19. As a PAL, I was pleased to be able to offer my participants the opportunity to finish the work from this year and to gain their award at the end. Going forward, I would suggest that we may have to adapt some of the activities for participants, depending on the restrictions and protocols that may still be in place at the start of the next academic year.

8 My students completed their projects at home in place of their Adventure Journey; it was very good, considering how little time the Gaisce office had to implement the changes.

12 [Allowing them to take ownership of the direction their journey took really helped. Choice boards collaborative planning and organising an event helped.](#)

14 It's a great idea, and well done to all involved.

18 [I like that they still get the opportunity to continue with the Gaisce programme at home and achieve their award.](#)

20 [I found this so helpful and a great campaign. Thank you.](#)

21 [I was very impressed with the level of engagement from students during this initiative. I thought it was great that Gaisce was able to be so flexible for the students during this time.](#)

24 It seems to be working well with my students. We have set up a Google Classroom, and they are keeping me updated on their activities and are encouraging each other.

26 This was an invaluable help to both myself and my students.

29 The personal and physical are very doable. Some community is doable over Zoom with parent consent on both sides.

31 I certainly informed my students and forwarded on the information to them.

44 Our participants have engaged and adapted to this version of Gaisce. Naturally, they are disappointed not to have completed their long-planned, carefully researched Adventure Journey, but if circumstances permit, maybe next spring they may have an opportunity to do so.

56 I thought the ‘Gaisce sa Bhaile’ campaign was an excellent idea. I had a number of students contact me about how they could complete their various activities and was able to direct them to the website and give them some of the ideas that were mentioned on the site. I felt students engaged with it really well.

60 It's a way of allowing students to complete the award, and it gave them something to do during lockdown.

65

Participants, despite being told they could step sideways in their tasks, found it difficult. I think that it was all a bit of a shock – online classes, remote learning, not seeing friends, [and] the school year grinding to a halt – so despite communicating this to pupils, many haven't found a new activity to sidestep into. The Backyard Camping is a huge success – a great fun way to join together and bring the award to completion. We have almost 40 participants joining in, Bronze and Silver, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, [and] Germany camping together :) On reading this, I only realise now that I could be encouraging others to join. I will get onto the F3 pupils next week. Remote teaching has been overwhelming for me as well as the pupils.

66

[Girls continued to do it at home. Linking in with Future Leaders was a great idea.](#)

67

I think it's necessary to allow simpler tasks to be used this year. This is an unprecedented time, and our freedom is completely limited. I'm thrilled that this does not mean my Gaisce participants will have to miss out. But as a general rule, when we are not curbed by the Coronavirus, I feel we need to maintain a high standard. I usually try and push my students. I feel a medal is worthless if you don't feel you earned it.

73

Yes, it is more difficult to embrace it during lockdown, but we[']ll see what happens and who gets back to me with record sheets.

74

I felt it was really good as it allows the program to continue.

76

This has been a fantastic approach to making the award achievable for the students! They have been able to adapt to their current circumstances, and again it shows the students that this can be adapted to all areas of their lives, both for the current situation and future situations.

78

I think the ‘Gaisce at Home’ initiative meant that the girls could keep going on their journey, facing adversities along the way, which will intimately make them more resilient.

80

Yes, they continued to communicate with me at least once a fortnight since March 12<sup>th</sup>.

83

This has been a necessary measure in my view to support the students to continue with the Gaisce award, and [it] was greatly welcomed.

84

Yes, I found this hugely important for the students to be able to continue. I had meetings with my students through Microsoft Teams and Classroom, and we discussed all areas. Our Adventure Journey was discussed, but the boys wanted to wait until [it was] safe [to] complete [it] together. My daughter is also in TY in another school, and she wishes to do the backyard Adventure. So, I think, again, the ‘Gaisce at Home’ gave the student an option on how to finish.

86

It has been invaluable in order for the students to see their award through to the end.

87

There are amazing resources available free to participants on the Ceist website, which I, as TY head and Gaisce PAL, informed my TYs about re[garding] the personal section of their award.

Since 22 March, Gaisce has been running ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This campaign encourages participants to continue their Gaisce Award and/or young people to sign up for the Gaisce Award during this time. If you have any insights or observations of ‘Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ on the campaign, please share your experience below:

**Responses: Reserved comments about the ‘Gaisce Sa Bhaile’ programme.**

- 17 It suits DEIS kids a lot more!
- 19 Far too difficult to encourage engagement with so many other factors to be managed, and students have not been responsive. This is a stressful experience and face-to-face contact is needed to encourage this kind of activity.
- 25 I would have liked to be more proactive in suggesting ideas and activities, but class and family demands have meant that I have had to let students be creative themselves in seeking alternatives.
- 32 I find it quite complicated to understand, especially the Adventure Challenge section. Students think the same as when I shared the info with them – a number came back who could not follow it.
- 36 While students can continue at home, the guidelines are not clear as to where to store evidence and who can sign off the activity.
- 37 It has been so difficult to encourage the students to complete, not through [the] fault of Gaisce or myself, but I find that sending the lads emails to remind them is not as effective as the face-to-face contact. I have 59 students working on Gaisce at the moment. Of those, I was confident that 45 would complete by the end of the school year. At the moment, I only have 16 who completed at home and are currently working on Adventure projects. It’s such a shame.
- 40 I don't know if it has been taken up.
- 41 I have found it difficult connecting with my candidates. I am still awaiting completed activity sheets. I have connected with them but have only heard back from a few.
- 43 Unfortunately, I have not heard anything back. I have encouraged them to finish it online.
- 52 I made a vain attempt to get students involved, but as most of them had already fulfilled their requirements, I just couldn't get them interested.
- 54 Tough to keep up for students due to motivation.
- 68 Students didn't buy into the ‘Gaisce at Home’.
- 71 It is more difficult to keep regular contact with participants and supporting them as they progress. You are relying on family members to clarify continued progress.
- 77 Very good initiative with lots of fantastic ideas. Unfortunately, it was harder to motivate students from afar to continue with the award and complete tasks at and around their home.

## Do you have any additional comments?

### Responses: Fresh thinking and innovation.

- 14 I think it is great that Gaisce is mostly run in schools, but teachers are badly overloaded. I wonder whether parent PALs could be more of a support.
- 23 I just wish I had more time to be more involved. I am delighted that we now have a number of Gaisce PALs, and I am rarely required. I did enjoy it, and I believe a version of the programme should be mandatory in some pre-TY format at junior cycle for their profile of achievement.
- 36 The age limit is too restrictive. I'd love to participate in the award, but I'm too old. We never did it when I was in TY.
- 51 The Department of Education should publicly and loudly support Gaisce.
- 60 Questions earlier asked about offering Silver and Gold Awards within a school. I doubt my school is unique in that Gaisce is started in TY with the Bronze Award. So, it's effectively Fifth Year before a student could consider a Silver Award and likely to be the Leaving Cert before any could consider a Gold Award. Because of the students' increased workload, it is not as easy for them to commit to Gaisce in senior cycle. I also don't have time on my timetable for fifth and sixth Years for meetings like I would with TYs. I'm not giving up all my meetings; I'm not a machine – I need a break. Also, there is an upper age limit for earning awards. [I] don't understand why this is the case... don't see why the award, which encourages physical activity, developing new skills and helping in the community would not be available to the general public. Even talking to a couple of teachers in my staffroom who are in their late 20s, [they] said they would have liked to do it, but they are too old.
- 72 I think new PALs may find it difficult to hold onto participants when things are not working out – maybe a little more help and flexibility from Head Office with certain issues might be good. I lost some participants over the years when the outdoor pursuits clashed with a major family event – weddings, first communion, etc., to name a few – it's worth looking at 'problem areas'.
- 87 I really think that regular meetings of Gaisce participants in the school is beneficial, especially for large groups, though it is a challenge for the PALs involved. I believe encouraging those students with both Bronze and Silver Awards combined under their belt should be encouraged to mentor the Bronze in TY as this would help the PALs who are inundated with CBAs now.

### Responses: Request for increased involvement by the Gaisce organisation.

- 17 I think that I need to be more inspirational about it.
- 26 More encouragement to be given to follow on with Silver Award - talk from Gaisce, etc.
- 32 Think someone from Gaisce should go to the schools at the start of the year to speak to students about the award (if the school request it). It gives the programme a more important standing than if delivered by a teacher within the school.
- 64 All students should have a visit at the start of the year from a Gaisce representative to kickstart their involvement.
- 71 Gaisce plays a key role and will play a key role in developing young people going forward so continual promotion is needed to make young people aware of the programme.

### Responses: Gaisce held in high esteem by participants.

- 1 I think that Gaisce has so much to offer young people, particularly given the sedentary lifestyle of many young people today. In an age where image is paramount, driven largely by social media, Gaisce offers young people a chance to step away from that environment. It encourages them not to be introspective but to look outwards, towards those in need in their community and to the natural world around them to provide them with perspective. As a teacher, I have observed that anxiety levels amongst young people are at an all-time high. I believe that Gaisce is a fantastic resource for building resilience and showing young people the world that exists beyond social media.
- 8 I cannot praise the office staff/regional staff enough; they are fantastic [and] always willing to help and support. They make the implementation of the programme so easy and enjoyable.
- 14 I think it is great that Gaisce is mostly run in schools, but teachers are badly overloaded. I wonder whether parent PALs could be more of a support.
- 20 Thank you for all your help throughout the years.
- 44 Definitely. The freedom of choice regarding activities... afforded to the participants is really positive.
- 80 It is a fabulous opportunity for participants to mature and develop new skills, meet new people and flourish as participants in society.
- 85 Very rewarding but can be hard work... always is with teenagers!

## Do you have any additional comments?

### Responses: Observations and issues.

- 19 Students that need it most don't necessarily participate.  
23 I just wish I had more time to be more involved. I am delighted that we now have a number of Gaisce PALs, and I am rarely required. I did enjoy it, and I believe a version of the programme should be mandatory in some pre-TY format at junior cycle for their profile of achievement.
- 29 I'm a Leader for students that wish to take it on. I am not involved anymore (too old in the tooth) where a class or year are helped along. I believe too much help is being given at the Bronze, so the initiative is taken from the participant. For example, the Adventure is taken out of the students' hands even by the award itself because of child welfare and safety.  
It's excellent but expensive at times and hard to organise. Bronze should be made accessible to anyone. A student can go down to soccer training [and not] be great [but] achieve, but for the Adventure it's out of their hands.
- 35 Sometimes, students are afraid to get involved as it not something they can do but sitting with them and discussing each of the areas, they realise that they can do it. It is all about how you look at it. Sometimes, teenagers see the problems and not the solutions.
- 60 Questions earlier asked about offering Silver and Gold Awards within a school. I doubt my school is unique in that Gaisce is started in TY with the Bronze Award. So, it's effectively Fifth Year before a student could consider a Silver Award and likely to be the Leaving Cert before any could consider a Gold Award. Because of the students' increased workload, it is not as easy for them to commit to Gaisce in senior cycle. I also don't have time on my timetable for fifth and sixth years for meetings like I would with TYs. I'm not giving up all my meetings; I'm not a machine – I need a break. Also, there is an upper age limit for earning awards. [I] don't understand why this is the case... don't see why the award, which encourages physical activity, developing new skills and helping in the community would not be available to the general public. Even talking to a couple of teachers in my staffroom who are in their late 20s. [they] said they would have liked to do it, but they are too old.
- 66 *As TY Co-ordinator, I got a slot on [the] timetable each week for admin. I check their progress here each week. Also, [the] girls keep [a] scrapbook and [provide an entry in it] each week.*
- 70 If you had lots of time, lots more could be done with the Gaisce participants. I feel in TY lots of students have part-time jobs and social lives... where they often seem to have less time that I do to participate.
- 72 I think new PALs may find it difficult to hold onto participants when things are not working out – maybe a little more help and flexibility from Head Office with certain issues might be good. I lost some participants over the years when the outdoor pursuits clashed with a major family event – weddings, first communion, etc., to name a few – it's worth looking at 'problem areas'.
- 82 I would like more recognition from school management, especially [in regard to] getting time for the hike.

### Response: Is everybody fit enough?

- 3 "Like they can be a challenge sometimes, not in terms of us as PALs, but they can be a challenge for the kids themselves because lots of them in terms of, like, their physical fitness. It's not as bad now but I would have said about five, six years ago, the fitness levels of the kids would have been an issue." ... "Yeah, I would have said, like, we would have done Kenmare to Killarney route two years in a row and, like, we would have had two or three girls on that, that were just, like, I was kind of considering how we gonna get them off this trip and home. But no, I wouldn't say that, now. Like a number of our lads as well have done, like we started Cork City Marathon so we were one of the first schools to do the school challenge in the Cork City Marathon as well. So, like, we, like the actual Adventure Journey part of it isn't really an issue." "Well, I would say Philip like in the last three years, like most of the kids, like, you know, in one section, they have to do physical activity, and most of them are like, well. 'I go to the gym every week anyway'. And you're like, 'Well, no it has to be a new one, so you need to pick a new one'. And they're like 'But I go to the gym twice a week or three times a week'. Like, five years ago, going to the gym was like, 'Oh, who will be in the gym and who might see me?' Whereas nowadays, they all go to the gym. So, like, like this year we have three classes taking part but like it's a voluntary thing in our school, so you don't have to do it. So, we've twenty kids doing it this year, over three classes and, like, all of them bar five had to search for a new physical activity because they go to the gym regularly." ... "What I would find too, in terms of us for continuing, because we always offer Silver, we always offer them the chance to progress if they want to. But, like, a lot of them play sports and their parents are like, 'You're in Fifth Year now, so you'll be missing for matches and stuff, I'd rather you didn't do Gaisce'. So, yes, we see a marked change in the fitness of the students, well, I would."

**Do you think Gaisce is better as a volunteer or as a conscripted-type programme for, say, TY?  
Which would you prefer?"**

8 "The year of the compulsory TY, we built it in as compulsory. However, that year, it just kind of threw up a few things. There was a few kids who weren't really engaging in it because they didn't opt into, you know, the school made it compulsory. So since then or at the end of that year, we actually had a staff meeting about the TY programme and a meeting with management. And I was after getting a support visit from Mary because I rang her and was like, 'How, you know, what can I do? What is the support there?' so she came out to the school. And after talking with her, I brought it to the school and said, 'There's no way we're making it compulsory in TY anymore because it just doesn't, it didn't have the same, I don't know, it just didn't have the same sense about it, you know'. There was kids who were dragging their feet, didn't want to do it, were being forced to do this so, we stopped it being compulsory after we made it compulsory for one year. Then we went back to it being opt in. And it has been that way ever since. And it's just so much better because if the kids buy in, that's the programme sold essentially and that's the successful running of the programme. You'd have some kids who say like, 'Oh, well, we'll see what the story is and, you know, we'll see how we get on' because I know the physical activity this year, there was a programme ran in school of self-defence. So, I was saying 'You can use that for your physical activity'. So the fact like we do normally, with TY, there might be maybe four or five who don't sign into it but the majority of the class do sign it and it's optional."

9 "No, not that I know of. Now, they would be strongly encouraged, you know, because of the Year Head of the TY coordination and everything and, in the past, the Principal, and everything would strongly encourage them. But it's not and I don't think it ever should be compulsory."

10 So, I think voluntary, but do you know what, in School X, I had some students at the end of the year, you know, and they'd be getting their medal and you'd be chatting at the graduation afterwards and they'd say, 'I thought Gaisce was compulsory, I thought we had to do it.' So, it was certainly pitched or... 'I didn't think we could leave.' So, that was the standing joke at Holy Faith, that I'd never let people leave. So, it's just that when they'd come to me, say, 'I'm going to quit,' I'd say, 'Now hang on, why, you know, let's work on this, you know, we'll come up with a solution,' or, 'We'll come up with...' You know, so, that's where that would come. So, I've probably contradicted myself there. But I think it's important that the PAL is a volunteer, you know, that they try and get PALs that want to do it rather than ones that have been told they have to do it, because then, I think, that if they don't buy into it, they cut corners in their students' Awards."

10 'I don't think you can make students sign up. I think you can strongly encourage them. And that's why I think it's very important that, at the start of TY, to run the Gaisce information session. So, on their very, very first day in TY – or even better still, at the end of Third Year, so – so that over the summer they can start thinking about possible things they could do for their Gaisce Award. You know, pitch it to them then, and pitch it to them that, 'You know what, if you get nothing else out of TY, this is one thing that...' And, 'You're not in competition with anyone else or anything, this is something that you can achieve. And it means that you're setting yourself challenges.' And I think the parents should be involved, that they know about it."

6 "I think there is one thing with Gaisce, and I think that Gaisce should look at the way the GAA and the way they market their product. The GAA would have you think they are the backbone of Irish society, you know. The GAA is very focused on sport, well-being, women in sport, all that, but Gaisce has so much more arms to that, and I don't think they market themselves enough, I think they sell themselves short. And I don't mean that in a critical way. I think there are probably people in Gaisce who have the same attitude that I have, you know. This is just a personal opinion but I can guarantee you that if there had of been a Transition Year presentation night, that the girl who was organising that GAA Future Leaders would have had people thinking that this was the best thing since sliced bread...but it's only one tenet of the four things that Gaisce would offer. Do you understand what I mean? I just think that there is so much more that Gaisce can do to market themselves and whatnot. You see, I'm a member of the GAA, I'm heavily involved in the GAA but when the GAA blow their nose everybody knows about it, you know what I mean? So, I don't know if it goes against the spirit of the people who work there or their spirit but it's a part of the GAA that does my head in. It's one of the reasons I like Gaisce ..."

**And did you get much of a signup for the GAA Leaders Programme?**

There was yeah, we had to cut the numbers that applied for it. Especially in the school we would get that. So we had 61 signups for Gaisce, but I'd say that there are only 31 that are going to finish it. In the GAA future leaders, there was an interest from 35 but there was only space for 20."

"It's the over-emphasis, well, as is said I'm heavily involved in GAA, I'm not anti-GAA but, like, it's just this, kind of, em, I don't know, I think the GAA have become, well put it this way, there's a non-GAA guy went into Croke Park and he took the girls from Transition Year and this lad is classically educated and well aware of his history and he wouldn't have played Gaelic, but despite being from Cork, but he came back and he's kinda going, 'Jesus Christ, these boys seriously become masters of their own propaganda', like, you know, when he went into the thing, I just think that Gaisce could, kind of, emphasise more in Transition Year, it's importance at a national level, whereby people know the importance of Gaisce. You are not trying to pull hen's teeth, like, you know, where you've to entice people to do it. They are nearly banging your door down saying, 'I Want to Do Gaisce'. Do you understand what I mean?"

4 "I mean, there's an ongoing challenge that, you know, some students are trying to do the minimum and they're trying to get around the rules. You're trying to say, 'No, look, I have to uphold standards here, that doesn't count'. So, that's a challenge.

I would say boys participating is a challenge. I think the girls are much stronger at this getting involved, where I see it anyway, and, in some cases, most of the time. Some of the time it could be seventy percent girls and thirty percent boys, you know.

Now, having said that, there was just the last two years the GAA have partnered with Gaisce and PE Teachers who take Gaelic were asking me about it and we were just getting involved in them and there were more boys this year than I thought in previous years, you know. So, yeah, so that became a bit of a concern to me that if the boys were moving away. But now, not all boys, but the numbers were definitely higher on the girls, you know, so that was a concern for me."

An ongoing concern is the Venture Project. Basically, I had to say, there's only two things you can do for the Venture Project because Gaisce doesn't recognise these venture activities per say, that those things qualify for it. The whole area of student welfare out on trips. We do a walking trip and a cycling trip and basically outside of that I tell them, 'Look, it's very, very unusual for something that I could qualify, or allow to go forward as a Venture Project'. Possibly, something like a scouting trip."

# Constituency

## School PAL Participants

### University College Cork

Dr Máire Leane; Dr Anna Kingston; Dr Féilim O'hAdhmaill.

### Gaisce – The President's Award

Dr Yvonne McKenna; John Cunningham; Avril Ryan; Ger Brady; ;Holly Furlong; Marion Irwin-Gowran; Mary Yore; Niall Barrett.

**Do President's Award Leaders attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?**

**with Gratitude**

# Gaisce PAL Research 2020

For further information

Contact Lead Research Team

*Philip Mangan*

