

Impact of Covid-19 among members

May 2020



Research aims and objectives:

To understand directly from members their needs and challenges related to Covid 19, so we can:

- Adapt and provide support accordingly
- Evidence this insight and need to key national stakeholders
- Improve fundraising applications, ultimately to generate funds and support members
- Build experience of what works for member groups in terms of advising and supporting our insight gathering

Methodology:

Sported enlisted voluntary support from a professional qualitative researcher, and conducted:

- 2 x 1.5 hour online groups

Focus groups and interviews were recorded and later analysed by Sported's insight team.

Participating groups

Participating groups are typical of Sported’s membership; they use sport as tool to address other social outcome, often engaging participants considered ‘hard to reach’.

All participants had a decision-making role and influence over the organisation they represent.

For context, some details of the groups are listed here.

In order to maintain anonymity, locations of groups are listed separately; Scotland and England (East of England, South East, London and North West.)

Activity	Organisation type
Angling	Constituted club
Gymnastics	Local charity
Exercise & fitness	Constituted club
Athletics	Constituted club
Judo & boxing	Community safety charity
Multisport	Local charity
Cricket	Community Interest Company (CIC)
Multisport	Local charity
Football plus other multi sport	Community Interest Company (CIC)

Summary of key findings



- COVID-19 has had a significant impact on groups. Physical delivery has largely stopped, and groups have **moved their delivery online**.
- inevitably there is significant **financial pressure**, but groups remain resilient and dedicated as ever.
- their concern that funding will go to those who are good at bid writing. Those who are in **most need of grant money may be missing out**
- groups report significant negative impacts on young people & anticipate a **greater demand** for their services, especially those aimed at NEET young people, and those suffering from ill mental health
- groups also note some **positive impact effects on young people** (closer family bonding, trying new things)
- groups have made significant changes (furloughing paid staff, securing financial help, learning new technology, understanding guidelines) and had to **adapt quickly**
- apart from funding, challenges are in **understanding social distances requirements**, how this should be applied in their setting, and how they will be able to deliver to smaller group sizes with the same resources
- adapting quickly means groups have put various measures in place to **ensure they are resilient in the future**
- support from organisations (Sported and others) is vital at this time. Even if they group appears 'ok' as is not the most in need, **more support can help them better serve their community**.

Changes to how organisations are running



Virtual world

Stopped delivery face to face and moved to **a virtual world** – using what's app, zoom, skype as well have phone. Groups are running classes online, virtual competitions, sending out activity packs, running online cooking classes. Having to re-plan, re-write safeguarding policies etc.



Finances

Groups are dealing with significant **financial** pressures; loss of income, cancelled fundraising events, reduced fees and income from whilst participants whilst still paying utility bills and rent. In response groups have furloughed employees, taking out government backed loans, taking mortgage repayment holidays, applied for grants.



Support and wellbeing

Concerned over those in small flats & high-rise buildings. Particular concern over young people's **mental health**, and loss of opportunities for young people. Help from support agencies has been appreciated (both practical and emotional). Groups have taken advantage of Sported webinars, funding information, support from professional volunteers & other resources. There is also a sense of concern for the wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

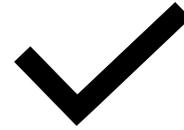
Impact on young people



- reduced activity levels
- reduced vital emotional support (from peers and youth leaders)
- removed important social interactions (with a wide range of people as well as peers)
- taking away ability to grow and become independent
- major disruption to education
- more anxious about their future

“when they’re down at the lake they’d start chatting and sharing how they’re doing. We’re losing all of that.” angling club

“it’s their whole social life outside of school. On top of taking school away means they’ve been left with absolutely nothing.” gymnastics club



- increased family bonding
- parents more engaged in sporting activity
- greater knock on effect to siblings taking part
- young people trying new things

“now we can fish again, loads of parents are making the effort because they know I can’t do it.” angling club

“they’re saying ‘I didn’t realise board games were so much fun’” multisport CIC

“teenage boys are really getting into it, and cooking with their mums.” multisport CIC

Challenges and solutions – reopening

Rules & regulations

Challenges

- planning for the reopening in compliance with social distancing (SD) regulations
- how to coach from a distance (challenges vary by sport, and guidance varies by locations)
- delivering to fewer participants per session (to comply with SD)
- understanding different liability, e.g. re online delivery
- ensuring hygiene needs are followed (cleaning kit that is usually shared, movement around building)
- more demand on facilities and venues (to comply with SD)
- deliver to huge age range (5 – 80), could be putting more people at risk

Needs

- clarity on SD regulations, and overcoming the myths
- specifics on how to apply in different sport settings, and what is expected by different parties (facility, coach, organisation, youth worker etc.)
- timeframes so can start planning
- confidence that we are complying with SD
- to re-plan how to deliver what we delivered before
- more qualified coaches and volunteers
- access to bigger venues (to deliver with SD)

Solutions

- directional signage and control for building
- guidance on how to communicate the regulations effectively
- training, e.g. on online safeguarding
- funding, to cover:
 - coaches wages, when having to deliver to less participants at once
 - training new coaches
 - more equipment, to reduce sharing
- support with planning
- connections & reduced rates at bigger venue

Challenges and solutions – reopening



Virtual world

Challenges

- some people have limited access to internet and relevant devices
- some people less IT literate
- those in 'IT poverty' excluded
- broadband connectivity in some areas
- interaction over video has limitation
- understanding different liability, e.g. re online delivery
- some activities can't be delivered virtually, e.g. gymnastics for safety reasons

Needs

- knowledge of different IT platforms & social media
- everyone connected to broadband
- access to devices
- clarity over insurance and liability of coaches delivering digital content

Solutions

- training, e.g. on delivering webinars & using different platforms
- guidance on insurance, liability and safeguarding
- funding, to cover:
 - IT devices
 - internet vouchers
- lobbying on broadband availability
- professional help with IT, or tapping into skills of volunteers

Challenges and solutions – reopening



Support and wellbeing

Challenges

- social isolation and people feeling lonely
- less able to gather ad hoc feedback from participants
- may be difficult to re-engage young people
- more demand on mental health services
- more NEET young people
- coaches and volunteers may not be confident to return
- many volunteers are older and may be vulnerable

Needs

- support to re-engage participants
- resources to engage vulnerable people & volunteers, e.g. providing food
- build confidence of coaches – ensure they feel comfortable
- harness people's desire to volunteer during COVID-19 (delivering groceries etc.) – engage parents to volunteer

Solutions

- going over safety measures (e.g. first aid), to ensure things haven't been forgotten over the break
- deliver to small groups ASAP (even if others are on waiting lists), while people are still keen to get back
- mentoring and support to most vulnerable
- keep up communication with coaches and volunteers, understand what they're comfortable with
- sharing plans & be transparent, empowering parents to be engaged
- connections with schools to recruit and re-engage

Challenges and solutions – reopening



Finances

Challenges

- significant shortfall in income (from fees, cancelled fundraising events, cross-subsidisation from summer season, grants delayed)
- still paying fixed outcomes (utility bills, mortgage etc.)
- higher demand & competition for grants
- participants will have lower willingness to pay (won't see it as a priority)
- rely on corporate sponsor, or closely linked to a business which is now vulnerable
- greater demand on premises when reopen

Needs

- funding to cover shortfall (reduced income, having to deliver with smaller sessions, unable to cross-subsidise from summer season)
- adapt pricing structure so participants can afford it
- finance support for those organisations not in desperate need now, but will suffer within a few months
- diversify income, so not reliant on one business
- re-plan e.g. reduce costs such as planned renovations

Solutions

- funding solutions
- support with grant applications
- strategic pricing advice (fees per session, also where to pitch membership fees with season being cut short)
- flexibility from funders, e.g. to fund other needs delay delivery until next year
- support with crowdfunding campaigns
- support to businesses with social benefits

Impacted their view on organisational reliance?



- must ensure that we can cover ourselves in a crisis
- realised the importance of having reserves
- realised the value of online resources
- we know that we can adapt, so feel more confident to take on new things
- worry more about the business that supports us

“We’ve been about since 1904. We have lived through Spanish flu, two world wars. One of the guys was looking through what they did then. We’re learning from them, we’re thinking about using some of things they did. So we know going forward we’ll be fine, but we still need support. The more support we get, the more we can impact our community.” athletics club

“We’ve realised we are not invincible. I’d like to think I am! But we are just two people running this club.” angling club

“The feeling from my trustees is we’ve just got to do it, so we will do it, because that’s just what charities do.” multisport group

Feedback to Sported



“We couldn’t have managed without Sported, to be honest. They have been there every step of the way, sending stuff to us.

They’ve been on the phone, emailed updates about projects. My [volunteer] mentor has been in touch again and helped me fill in an emergency funding application form.

What I’ve wanted has been there – the regular updates – it’s just kept you going. Even this [focus group], the webinars that have come up, it’s just made you feel like you are part of a family and everybody’s been so supportive.

I mean if we hadn’t had Sported on our back for last 18 months, we wouldn’t be putting our project where it was, and with COVID-19 they were there straight away, going *‘right where are you, what are doing?’* and whatever and they’ve been brilliant.

The impact on us would have been, well we probably would have just went *‘ok that’s enough now, we can’t do this anymore’*.

We’d gone too far to walk away. We re-vamped everything this year because of Sported’s support, through the support they’ve given us. They’ve just kept it going for us. Really positive.”

“I couldn’t get on the emergency funding webinar, but Evan sent me the recording and slides. I mean Evan [member services coordinator] is just Evan, he’s so brilliant. Whatever you ask of him, he’s there.”

“It’s the dedication in helping you when you need it. It’s a key point with Sported – nothing is ever too much.”

“The support has been non-stop, much better than other statutory organisations. I find Sported much more relevant, and they really listen to grass-roots organisations.”

“The best resource is webinars, for example the one on fundraising from a Lottery assessor. I missed it but they sent the recording.”

“I’d signed off with my mentor in February but then out of the blue he pinged up and said *‘can I help with anything?’* We put this emergency funding bid together in less than two weeks.

He was on the phone to me for nearly 2 hours a night at one point just going through it. They don’t have to do that but [Sported volunteers] are just so dedicated.”

How can the community sports system help?



“We’re gonna need support coming out of it, rather than an the moment. There’s not a long of we can actually do at the minute without an end-game. How we can actually meet the need we’re anticipating.”

“We deliver all kinds of sport,; netball, football, judo, boxing fitness. To try to get funding for that you have to go to each of the separate funding bodies. We want to give kids the choice, we want to show kids that there is a sport that they will be able to excel at, we need to have the options for funding multisport.”

“If they could buy kit and cleaning equipment in bulk, and then distribute to all the groups, getting it to the clubs at cost price. We need to use our money really well to effect our communities, if we’re spending it on things that are inflated because of the situation then that’s not good for our communities.

“It’s the whole resetting support - grass-roots sports against elite sport. Up until COVID a lot of money gets pumped into elite sport and grass-roots sports are fighting for it. Now in New Zealand they are using this chance to have those discussions - do you put more money into the grass-roots sport which then over time will feed your elite sports?”

“A greater acceptance of the challenges that young women face at certain ages. They feel like they don’t fit in a certain mould. Therefore, the greater acceptance that women need to be encouraged to do different sports to what the education system is offering them.

I would go into a school and offer them something totally different. I’m a bit biased, but I feel that school P.E. does not fit a lot of the girls in school, and the statistics prove it. I’d say look at the statistics and look at what your girls are doing. I get girls at the lake who say *‘I bunk off P.E.’*

I would change the way sport in school is delivered to our 11 to 18.”

THANK YOU!

To the group leaders
who took part.

To volunteer Rachael
Walton (rkwconsulting
ltd) who facilitated the
sessions.