

Sported Emergency Fund Supported By Barclays

Sported partnered with Barclays to release an emergency fund for select members delivering football activities to young people, particularly those working with girls. Groups were offered the opportunity to apply for a £1,500 grant to support activities and engagement during the Coronavirus pandemic.

This emergency fund for local community groups complements Barclays strategy, working with the FA to make football more accessible to all girls at a grassroots level and inspiring the next generation through their title sponsorship of the Barclays FA Women's Super League.

In addition to the funding, Sported provided support to groups to help them to engage with young people during the lockdown period and beyond.

This included:

1. Use of technology for virtual engagement. Hosting webinars and networking opportunities to share tips and techniques on engaging young people in virtual activities.
2. Professionally designed digital content and marketing materials, to enable groups to attract young people (particularly girls).
3. Specific women and girls online training modules to learn about the best way to recruit, engage and retain girls in sport.

Outcomes:

1. To support vulnerable community organisations, allowing them to continue to operate during the lockdown period
2. To enable these organisations to continue to engage with young people to keep them active and support their mental wellbeing
3. To allow groups to build back better once they can run activities again, to engage with more young people, particularly girls

Key Achievements



Total of

1098

participants;

69.6%

were female

90% grants spent

as per group plans to support continued **delivery of activities** during and beyond the pandemic

Organisations **increased** participation by

418
members

Longer term sustainability

95%

groups believe activities will continue beyond funding

27.9% from BAME communities

24% from lower socio-economic groups

3.6% of participants were refugees

2.6% from travelling communities

Successes

Groups reported their key successes as two-fold; the impact of the grant on the group but also the implications this subsequently had for participants. The increase in girls participating in football was a major success to many members and the vision that this may be sustainable going forward was also a huge positive to group leaders.

‘...key success factor in making sure that they kept playing this year otherwise there was a distinct possibility that the team would have otherwise folded’

– Crosspool FC



**67 new participants attended sessions
at Club Doncaster Foundation**

The support from Barclays Emergency Response funding was incalculable to many of the groups who received it. Our Grant Giving has seen significant impacts on our member groups and participants. Many groups reported using the additional support to increase coaching capacity, purchase new equipment and develop promotional materials, all of which bolstered their chances of survival throughout and following the pandemic.

'The grant has given us chance, as an organisation, to buy modern football equipment so we can hold these sessions in the next few months and in years to come. Before the grant, most of the equipment that we had was broken unfortunately.'

– Friends, Families and Travellers

One club also reported how the funding supported the development of a new partnership with a local secondary school which has helped them to increase their provision going forward, with a

'new after-school football offer at the Crew Club which will be delivered in partnership with the school.'

Feedback from Sported member groups was hugely positive and recognised the difference that the funding made to their group's longer-term sustainability.

'This grant was both timely due to COVID-19 needs and literally a godsend to help us keep going and investing in new, much needed training equipment and to help all coaches, players and volunteers keep as "COVID-19 safe" as possible through these worrying times. A huge thanks for Sported and to Barclays as sponsor for making such a huge difference to our organisation.'

– Crosspool FC

Participant **Impacts**

In addition to group leaders recognising the importance of the grants to their groups, they also highlighted how important this was to their participants.

‘Without the support of Spotted our young people would be at a further disadvantage than they already are not being able to access positive activities, role models and gain skills.’

– Community on Solid Ground

‘It has been a huge boost as we were not sure of how many people would come back after the lock down and long break. It meant that we could be sure of running our activities regardless of numbers and provide some much-needed physical activity and an outlet for the girls.’

– Actonian Girls FC

In addition to increasing female participation within groups, the grants have supported personal development of participants. Community on Solid Ground reported how the funding had helped support them to increase girls’ knowledge and awareness of health issues and encouraged them to acquire related skills which have resulted in healthier lifestyles for themselves and their families. Also, from a physical health point of view, one club had noticed the detrimental effect that lockdown had had on its young people, with many of them having gained weight through leading less active lifestyles. After taking part in funded activities, a carer of one participant noted:

‘I wanted to mention that [participant] has lost a few pounds over the summer break. The outdoor activities and healthier options did her good. Her movements are so much more flexible.’

– Solidarity Sports

In addition to the physical gains, mental and social wellbeing benefits were noted too, with Solidarity Sports also highlighting that ***'home is not always a safe place for every child and being able to offer this support for families during the summer has been a lifeline for some.'*** The increase in confidence of participants was reflected across several of the groups, with many girls thriving from the social element of playing with like-minded individuals:

'She [participant] feels that by coming to this club she has gained confidence and made lots of new friends. SS says the coaches and girls are welcoming and non-judgemental and it has given her the opportunity to meet and make friends with girls from other schools and enjoy the sport.'

- Community on Solid Ground

'The biggest success is the response from the girls taking part. They have really enjoyed the sessions...it's been great to give the opportunity of learning new skills, not just football related, but just seeing how they have grown in confidence and communication has been a real positive of these sessions'

- The Great Millers Youth Forum



Challenges

One of the key challenges in the COVID-19 response was ensuring sessions were safe and that families felt confident to return to face-to-face delivery. The support offered by Sported to navigate COVID-19 guidance, develop a risk assessment and return to face-to-face delivery ('The Physical Return') was vital to many groups.

Group leaders recognised quickly that following COVID-19 guidelines and risk assessment protocols was key to encouraging participants back to their groups and activities. Groups recognised that many parents were apprehensive about their children returning and acknowledged the important work that needed doing to build trust with families that the group would be a safe and secure environment for their child to partake in sport and physical activity.

'We spoke to all the parents and talked them through the risk assessment and other work we had conducted as an organisation to ensure we were COVID-19 safe... since the sessions have started we feel we have built on this relationship with parents and that this means there is a high level of trust between them and the Crew Club.'

- The Crew Club

Additional challenges have been around the quantity of equipment and the need to disinfect/clean equipment between uses. The grant has supported groups to purchase more equipment to facilitate the streamline operation of sessions and as reported by one group *'improve the experience of both staff and participants'* Solidarity Sports.



Learning

Several groups identified that the pandemic has been a real learning curve in terms of managing communication, online delivery and still providing sessions for young people to retain their engagement.

Additionally, many group leaders recognised the importance of providing a holistic approach to delivery of sessions, realising that sessions would not only teach football skills but would also incorporate life skills, mental health, and would be a way to start to reduce inequalities in BAME and lower socioeconomic groups;

‘The biggest success is the response from the girls taking part. They have really enjoyed the sessions... it’s been great to give the opportunity of learning new skills, not just football related, but just seeing how they have grown in confidence and communication has been a real positive of these sessions’

– Football Chance Foundation

Many groups discussed the importance of female coaches to lead on the girls-only sessions and how this has helped participants to feel more comfortable during sessions;

‘We learnt the importance of upskilling female participants, where they can become volunteers and then coaches... projects like this support this but sustainability is key’

– Community on Solid Ground



Case Studies

Girls from Barnsley Women's FC

The Great Millers Youth Forum

One participant, who has lived in the UK for 8 years after moving from Poland, has experienced life-changing benefits from participating in the sessions. She has struggled in school within social situations and has previously found it difficult to fit in and make friends.

Since taking part in the sessions at The Great Millers Youth Forum in the 'Girls United Through Football' project, she has grown in confidence, both inside and outside of school, after the sessions have given her opportunity to socialise with different people in a different environment. She has developed the confidence to join in with people at break times in school and has asked to join one of the Girls' football sessions, showing that she's confident enough to attend even without knowing anyone.

'The session has proved to be a real benefit for the girls, you can see just how much more confident they look and how they have learned to communicate with each other instead of just shouting or ignoring each other.'

- Group Leader, The Great Millers Youth Forum

Abraham Moss Warriors

Landon is an 11-year-old boy from the traveller's community based in Cheetham Hill, North Manchester.

As Landon is away travelling the country a lot with his family, he has been unable to join a traditional football club because he misses so many of the sessions. However, because the Warriors have been doing so many more sessions online it has enabled him to initially join with the coaching equipment provided, then when we did face to face sessions, he has jumped at the chance to take part.

Now even after just a short period of time being with the Warriors, he has already made the team sessions and has become a valuable member of the club. Landon is incredibly happy and has made lots of new friends.

None of this would have been possible without this funding so thank you

- June Kelly MBE, Group Leader, Abraham Moss Warriors

List of 24 funded groups:

All groups are based near one of the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 hub venues in London, North West, South East and Yorkshire & Humber.

The large majority are non-traditional youth and community groups working with very vulnerable young people, already delivering football activities and working with girls.

Youth Action Alliance, London
The Crew Club, Brighton
Our Barn Youth Club, London
Oldham Greenhill Community Sports Club, Manchester
Friends, Families and Travellers, Brighton
Solidarity Sports, London
Manchester Maccabi Community & Sports Club
Football Chance Foundation, London
Crosspool FC, Sheffield
Actonians LFC, London
Droylsden Youth Centre, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Manchester
Abraham Moss Warriors Junior FC, Manchester
Great Millers Youth Forum, Rotherham
The Dalgarno Trust, London
Community on Solid Ground, Manchester
Barnsley Womens FC, South Yorkshire
Club Doncaster Foundation, South Yorkshire
Worthing United Youth FC, Sussex
Maltby Miners Junior FC, Yorkshire & Humber
Streatham United FC, London
Cre8 Football Academy, London
Greater Manchester Football Club
Manchester Dragons Community Junior FC
Active Communities Network Hampshire

**We help community groups survive,
to help young people thrive.**

www.sported.org.uk

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