

# Consultation with Young People

**Wales**

**December 2021**



# Purpose of the research and research methodology

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Wales has the highest levels of poverty out of the four UK countries. They estimate that around 30% of children in Wales live in relative poverty. Research has shown that children living in low-income households are more likely to experience mental health issues.

The COVID-19 crisis has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the physical and mental health of many children and young people across the country. Our previous research, and that of others, has showed that traumatic experiences at home, social isolation, the loss of routine, fears about the pandemic and disruption to education have all increased pressure on young people. In many cases, young people with mental health needs have also struggled to access support over the last few months, for a variety of reasons. Conversely, as safety restrictions eased during the summer, some young people have adapted well during the lockdown period, including some who have a protective home environment and a difficult relationship with their school. Many young people have shown considerable resilience during the pandemic.

The purpose of this research was to capture the views of young people (with lived experience of disadvantage) from across our Sported network in Wales, to share their experiences, understand what is important to them and establish how they and help shape the provision of sport and healthy activities in their community.

A short desk analysis exercise established existing data, research, challenges and insight for young people across Wales, as well as the roles community sport groups play in supporting them in their communities. Primary research was conducted through the completion of eight in-depth interviews with community group leaders (face to face and virtually). The outcomes of these interviews helped shape the foundations of the questions used within the ten youth focus groups (nine face to face, one virtual).

97 young people from across Wales participated in ten focus groups, they were from a range of age groups, ethnicities, economic and social backgrounds, and mental and physical health needs. Community groups' main sport and physical activities were wide-ranging, from football to mixed martial arts, boxing to wheelchair rugby, through to community centres and multi-sports environments.

# Sported in Wales

**208**  
Members

**48**  
Different  
sports

Members delivering in Wales's most  
deprived communities

**32%**

Working with young people  
living in poverty or located in  
20% most deprived areas

Reaching over

**29,598**  
young people

Improving young lives and communities:



**54%**

Tackle inequality in  
sports participation



**54%**

Have a focus on  
health and wellbeing



**4,440**

Young people with  
a disability engaged

But these community groups need our support to survive...



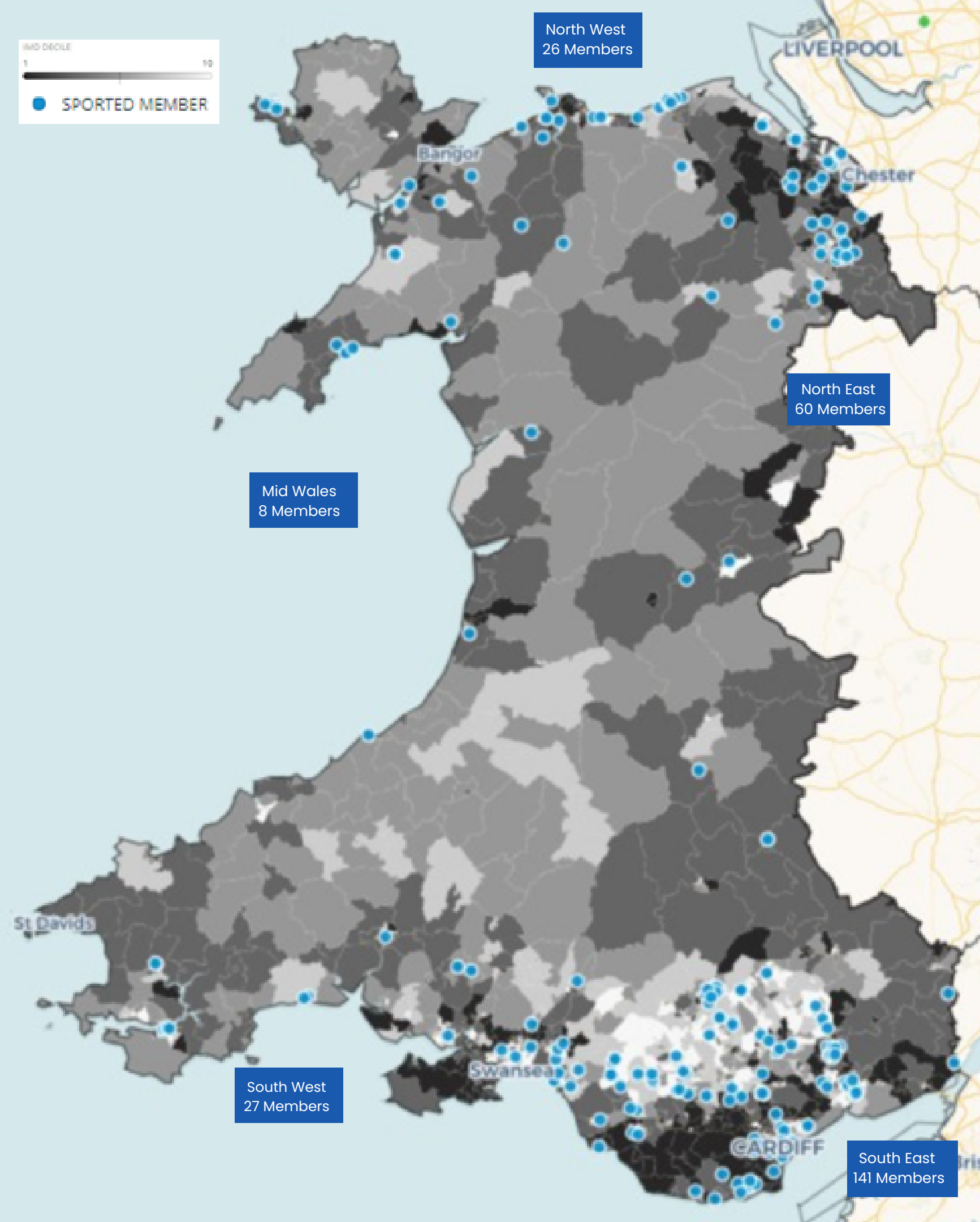
**60%**

Entirely volunteer  
led



**55%**

Have an income  
under £10k



# Sported's grassroots groups and their communities'

Sported works closely with organisations who provide such important spaces, empowering the local heroes running these groups by providing professional expertise, resources, and operational support, free of charge, to help their group survive and thrive. Our network of community sport groups is fully aware of the difficulties young people face. In our Pulse survey (October 2021) of our Wales membership



Mental health was identified as the most significant challenge young people are facing in communities with 27% of responses expressing concerns around young people's wellbeing.



Only 42% of groups stated that 80-100% of young people had returned with 30% of groups stating that less than 60% of their participants had returned since reopening

## In-depth interviews with community group leaders

The following questions were asked in the one to one interviews with eight group leaders.

1. Has there been a change to the issues young people are facing in your community since the pandemic? If yes, what are those new challenges? If no, what are the challenges that have continued?
2. Is there anything young people are sharing/saying to you at the moment?
3. Is your club doing anything differently to tackle the issues/challenges young people are facing?
4. Is there anything you would like to do more of to support the needs of young people in your club?
5. How could young people help shape sport and healthy activities provision more than they currently do?

“Young people have had their financial, emotional, and vocational wellbeing inordinately affected by the pandemic. In addition to job losses, educational disruption and financial pressures, young people have also experienced increased family strain, heightened anxiety, and exacerbated mental health issues as a result of the pandemic. These areas are interlinked, and further compounded by the overall uncertainty of employment prospects.”

– survey respondent



# Insight: In-depth interviews with community group leaders



Young people's home environment has changed considerable because of Covid.

- Food banks
- Parents losing jobs
- Fuel, food and digital poverty

Providing a nurturing, safe environment for children and young people.

They want to part of something, they want to contribute, they want a voice, they want to be listened to. They want to grow their community.



We are all in this together. Who's ahead and who's behind.

Collaborative learning is key, sharing what has worked well and how we can grow together.



Young people need to be involved in shaping things that impact them. Representation of their views.



Young people's lives have moved online even more. Learning, socialising, playing, gaming, communication, etc. Social media creates insecurity, mis-information, vulnerability for young people. Peer pressure - need to be liked, need to be relevant.

Young people are nervous, need to create environments for physical activity and working with others.

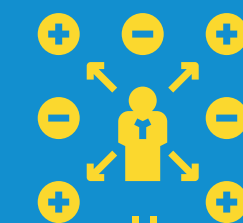
Young people have missed structure and routine during each lockdown. We have added more structure which has been well received, especially for young people under 16 years old.



Tea, Talk and Toast sessions. Completed either as a group or individually. Giving young people the chance to share.



Young people want a safe place, somewhere off the streets. They have nowhere to go. Their lives have changed so much, they have very little adult role models around them now.



Young people need opportunities, mentoring, guidance, inclusive environment, fun, friendships, etc.

# Themes: **In-depth interviews with community group leaders**

These themes helped shape the questions asked within the youth focus groups.

## Connected

- Positive Relationships
- Social Skills
- Understanding Self

## Protected

- Safety
- Health Mind and Body
- Learning Engagement

## Respected

- Being Heard
- Having a Voice
- Positive Contribution



# Participants: **Young people**

At Spotted we know not all young people have the same start in life and the pandemic has amplified this even more. We know that **community sport and physical activity can help young people overcome barriers and fulfil their potential**. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says that **children and young people have the right to have fun** in the way they want to, whether by playing sports, watching films, or something else entirely. Children and young people should be able to take part freely in activities, just like adults. **We empower community groups to help play their part in achieving outcomes for children and young people**, as well as recognising their contributions to the UNCRC.



**97 young people from across Wales participated in ten focus groups, one was delivered virtually while the others were completed face to face in groups of 6-12 young people.**



**They were from a range of age groups, 43 young people were aged 7-11, 34 young people were aged 12-17 and 20 young people were aged 18-25. **Need to speak to Debs to get her age range data for these.****



**42.2% identified as female, 51.5% identified as male and 6.2% identified as other.**

To ensure the diversity of our youth representation, we spoke with groups that have a focus on supporting ethically diverse communities, young people with disabilities and young people who identify as LGBTQI+. Each focus group, young people had the option to have an open discussion, or to use flip chart paper to write down their responses, or the facilitator wrote down their responses. Each young person was offered a £10 gift voucher or they could use the incentive collectively for a group activity for participating. For example, one group decided they all wanted to go to Ninja Warriors together while other groups opted for Tesco or Amazon vouchers.



# Connected: Young people focus groups

The insight from the group leaders informed us of the questions we wanted to ask young people around feeling connected. We asked the following questions.

1. This sports club is .....because.....
  - All the good things
  - All the not so good things
2. How are you feeling being back at the club following restrictions/lockdown?

"Back socialising with people I feel safe with. People I haven't seen." – focus group respondent

"Health is wealth" – focus group respondent

"Very supportive, very welcome. From previous experiences, it can be a very competitive, masculinity environment, do well or leave" – focus group respondent

"Non-judgmental, in previous places if you made mistakes you were out. Cater for any level doesn't matter if you have never kicked a football everyone is welcome to come and play. If you want to just get fit. Didn't join until I was 18, easy to make friends. It has a community feel to it" – LGBTQI+ collective focus group responses.

"I put on a stone during lockdown, being back I have lost it. Happy to be back. I learn from the coaches and other people" – focus group respondent

"It is a home, it makes me feel safe to come in" – focus group respondent

"All the coaches are not mean, they are happy, they teach kids skills" – focus group respondent



## Connected Insight: Focus Groups with young people

How young people are feeling being back following restrictions/lockdown.



Across all focus groups young people shared how the feeling of a family, community and safety were key factors that made their club good.

The opportunity to learn new skills and build their physical and mental wellbeing.

Many young people expressed their clubs were bigger than just sports. They are:

- advocates for inclusivity.
- a safe space outside of the home.
- a place to be informed about Covid-19.
- an equal playing field.

Young people spoke about the importance of mentors, leaders and role models. They helped with:

- anxiety.
- mixing with people again after lockdowns.
- feeling at ease and included.

Young people expressed concerns of people leaving the club. Their solutions were around using digital technology to attract more young people, to shout about what is being achieved, to celebrate the highs and the lows.

# Protected: Young people focus groups

The insight from the group leaders informed us of the questions we wanted to ask young people around feeling protected. We asked the following questions.

1. What are your top three challenges/concerns about in the coming months?
2. What role does attending this club have on building a healthy lifestyle (e.g. sleep, diet and exercise) which supports your wellbeing, resilience and confidence?
3. What activities would best support promoting and developing emotional and physical wellbeing?
4. How could you help shape sport and healthy activities provision within your club?
5. How do you feel in the area where you live?
  - Very Safe / Safe / Neither safe or unsafe / Unsafe / Very unsafe
6. Would you like to tell us why? Can you think of anything that would make you feel safer in your community?

"A lot of bullying at school and I get bullied. At the club I have people to talk to" – focus group respondent

"I would feel safer if there were more police around" – focus group respondent

"The club helps with my anger issues and anxiety. When I come here it makes me feel happy, because at home I'm upset, but feel better when I come here" – focus group respondent

Unique experience, all on a level playing field. Always someone there – that is what makes the club so special. Whether life is going right or wrong, always someone there to help.

Feels like a community where you can reach out to people. Not everyone is going to have good days. Numerous people to support you in general and as a young person.

The club has 8 advance mental health first aiders! We know it is a safe space" – People with disabilities collective focus group responses.

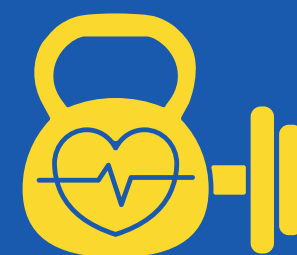
"I was being bullied at school; I leave school an hour later than everyone else, so it is safe for me to walk home. I have been coming to the club for six weeks and my self-confidence and belief has increased. I know I'll be leaving school the same time as everyone else soon" – focus group respondent



## Protected Insight: Focus Groups with young people

What role does attending this club have on building a healthy lifestyle?

**Social**  
Playing with friends  
Growth mindset  
**Train**  
**Mental wellbeing**  
Keeps you healthy  
Helps anyway it can  
Consistency  
Purpose  
Distracts me from eating biscuits  
This place helps me learn stuff  
Break from normal life, everyday life  
Friendly - we are all in the same boat  
Coming here gives me energy  
Exercise Gets you off your bum  
**Healthy wellbeing**  
It helps me sleep  
Keeps you fit  
Keep active  
**Fitness**



Community sports groups are about more than sport. They are about friendship, team work, key life skills, resilience, a sense of belonging, and most of all a safe space without judgement.

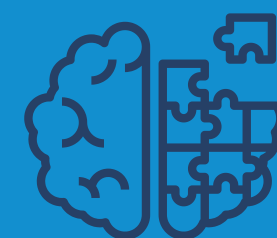


There was an overwhelming sense of community, family, a sense of belonging and safety from all young people.

100% of young people stated they felt Very Safe or Safe within their community club setting.



Three focus groups expressed concerns of safety, specifically around kidnapping. Potentially stemming from increased media coverage in this area recently. A number of young people had formulated escape plans as a result.



Young people expressed concerns about another lockdown, new variants and being cut off. Young people recognised that Covid-19 had brought mental health to the top of the agenda, balancing the battle of the unknown – building resilience with things changing at short notice.

# Respected: Young people focus groups

The insight from the group leaders informed us of the questions we wanted to ask young people around feeling respected. We asked the following questions.

1. How can young people be more involved in making decisions about things that affect them?
2. Is your club doing anything differently to tackle the issues/challenges young people are facing?
3. Is there anything that you have not had the chance to talk about?

"Mental health is a big ticket item. Branch out to universities to get more young people involved. Get involved with our sport and mental health chats." – focus group respondent.

"If we train more and do more activities it will raise awareness of what we do to get more people involved." – focus group respondent.

"At school we have a Student Voice. If enough people raise an issue it gets taken up. Would be great to have something similar at the club" – focus group respondent.

"Would love more extra classes." – focus group respondent.

"Not sure how I could get more involved" – focus group respondent


"Mental health support in education does not feel as organic as it does within the club. It is not all about the results, it is about the social side and being one community." – focus group respondent.

"We don't get asked enough" – focus group respondent.

"There are not enough safe spaces for young people to go. Would love to be involved in how we make more of these" – focus group respondent.

"I don't have confidence to ask people what I want. I just agree what everyone else" – focus group respondent





We get asked and asked but there is no action.


People just nod but nothing happens, not really being listened to.

Stigma around if it is a young person, pretend we listen but actually listen to adults.



**Youth leadership.**  
**Future generation.**  
**Make things more accessible.**

People listen to you, have an opportunity to shape what is important.



Talk to people. Take responsibility.

Express your feelings (To teachers, parents and at the club).

Persevere (With your voice, make your feelings know, and your work).


Be a pain in the bum, nag.

Make your voice heard, making sure you have an opinion.

Voice to speak up.

Be heard.

**How can young people be more involved in making decisions about things that affect them?**



**Consulting with young people within our network to better understand how they can:**

- Have a voice
- Feel part of the solution and not the problem
- Be regarded as community contributors
- Resolve local issues in partnership with their community



Understanding how young people can influence things that impact them. Such as, the environment.



It is a partnership, young people, coaches, parents, families, group leaders, mentors, positive role models, volunteers, etc.

Their was a collective desire to support, listen and help one another.

## Looking forward: **what needs to happen next**

Coronavirus has robbed many of us of what we need to stay healthy – both mentally and physically. We know young people want to be active community contributors; however, we also recognise the pressures of society placed on them. Moving forward Sported's youth engagement will be underpinned by a holistic approach of physical and mental wellbeing.

### **Connected**

#### **Impact Through Stories**

Young people share their stories, supporting them to find their voices and develop their confidence to be able to consider their role in the world and what they would want to achieve beyond the parameters of their background.

Raising the profile of existing youth leadership and young ambassador programmes. Supporting young people to apply for these opportunities, as well as creating a steppingstone for them to feel comfortable to engage, giving them a sense of belonging.

### **Protected**

#### **Shared learning**

Providing 1:1 support and facilitating groups to come together, share good practice, and learn from each other, these groups will act as a catalyst to others, building capacity, confidence, and knowledge.

As groups co-produce local action plans, young people will feel empowered to inspire and mobilise themselves and others towards a common purpose, in response to personal and/or social issues and challenges, to effect positive change.

Young people expressed interest in:

- How to engage with local police force to make them feel safer.
- How to have a voice in their local area about the environment.

### **Respected**

#### **Co-production**

We want to build a more inclusive society, by promoting and embedding a culture of youth voice, shared decision making, and co-production within our network

Co-produced to recognise, reflect, and respond to the specific needs and contexts of young people. From the consultation young people expressed a desire to have more of a voice, empowering them to lead by giving them the skills to develop and deliver their ideas.



**Sported would like to thank the young people and group leaders for their support and time with the consultation for this report.**

**We also wish to thank the Sported field team for their hard work in conducting the research.**

If you would like more information or would like to discuss further please contact:

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