

Sported Community Pulse

UK – April 2024

793
responses

State of the network

- **95% are confident** (extremely or fairly) that **their group will exist in six months' time**.
- **79% are confident** (extremely or fairly) that **their group will exist in three years' time**, with a rise in those saying they aren't sure compared to the six-month timeline (16% compared to 4%).
- **Securing funding** is the most common priority for groups over the next six months (85%), followed by **engaging new participants** (73%). Other high priorities include **planning for the future** (64%), **volunteer recruitment/retention** (56%), and **retaining participants** (56%).
- **Immediate financial hardship**, including the impact of cost-of-living increases, remains the most common challenge facing young people, with nearly half of respondents (46%) saying this is an issue for young people in their communities. A third told us **mental health** is a challenge for young people (33%) and a quarter said **long-term poverty/inequality** is impacting their young people (27%). Around one-in-five said there's **a lack of opportunities/activities for young people** (22%).

Mental and physical health

- **More than three-quarters** (85%) agree that **running a community organisation has become more stressful** over the last two years.
- **A large majority of groups** (94%) agree that community sport and physical activity have a role to play in preventing mental health issues for young people.
- **The same proportion (94%)** agree that community sport and physical activity have a role to play in improving young people's mental health.
- 84% of groups told us **they get inactive young people active**.
- Half of groups (52%) said **young people at their group disengaged from/reduced participation in sport and physical activity because of cost-of-living pressures** in the last six months (31% weren't sure).

Communities

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents agree (definitely or tend to) that **they personally can influence decisions affecting their local area** (60%). 41% disagree that they can do so.
- Around half of groups (48%) say that **place-based working is an approach they've noticed in their community**, with a quarter reporting it isn't (23%).
- The most common reason **why groups have connected with other community organisations in their area is to engage participants**, with around half of groups reporting this connection (52%). A similar number have connected to share facilities (47%).
- **Groups are least likely to have connected with others in their area to share equipment** (24%), engage in peer-to-peer support (25%), or collaborate on joint funding bids (30%).
- However, **groups most want to connect with others in their area to develop joint funding bids**, with around half seeking to do so (52%). Around the same proportion also want to join with other community groups in their area to engage participants (48%).

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- More than three-quarters of groups (78%) said the **lack of representation of minoritised groups** within sport **impacts on young people from their community taking part** (to a great extent or somewhat).

How grassroots and elite sport interact

- **Around half of groups** (52%) agree (strongly agree or agree) that the **investment made into success at Olympics and Paralympics impacts positively on grassroots sport**. 16% of respondents disagreed.
- The most common reason groups cited as a reason why **young people at their group who want to progress in elite sport aren't able to do** so was **the cost of participation** (79%). Half of respondents pointed to a lack of satisfactory facilities (51%).
- **Groups were split on whether big sports events in the UK increase enquiries, membership, or engagement for their group** from young people: 39% said they do, with 38% saying they don't.

Youth voice

- **Three quarters of groups** (79%) involve **young people in shaping what the group delivers**.
- Suggestions for how best to support groups to involve more young people in such discussions included:
 - Help in recruiting more staff/volunteers to deliver sessions that bring young people together for this purpose
 - External facilitators with professional experience in delivering feedback workshops
 - Resourcing support, such as good practice guides, as well as any technology required (online survey tools).
 - Help in building partnerships with other local organisations that work with young people to maximise opportunity to hear their voices (such as schools).
 - Marketing and engagement support to attract more participants.
 - Courses to build young people's skills, confidence, and leadership abilities.
 - Funding for any and all of the above.

Funding community sport

- **Very few groups have been rejected for funding** because they lacked a constitution/articles of association (3%), a safeguarding policy (1%), insurance (2%), or the relevant background checks (1%).
- **Main challenges for community groups in accessing funding include** limited staff capacity and lack of experience, burdensome and complex application processes, demonstrating impact in line with funder requirements, and rigid grant requirements that don't meet groups' most pressing needs.
- **Funding can be more innovatively delivered** through more direct contact between funders and groups to understand need and capacity, more flexible funding outcomes (especially in supporting core costs), greater emphasis on partnerships supporting joint bids, and co-produced grants that include the voice of community groups in their creation.

Response Profiles (based on groups with available data)

- 52% of groups are from areas having the highest levels of relative deprivation in the UK (IMD 1-3).
- 59% are volunteer-led.
- 28% have an annual turnover of less than £10,000.
- 25% are A profiles (Very small), 32% are B profiles (Small), 21% are C profiles (Small-Medium), 19% are D profiles (Medium), and 2% are E profiles (Large).