

Wales / Winter 2024-25

# The Pulse

Issues facing grassroots sport and the communities and young people it serves



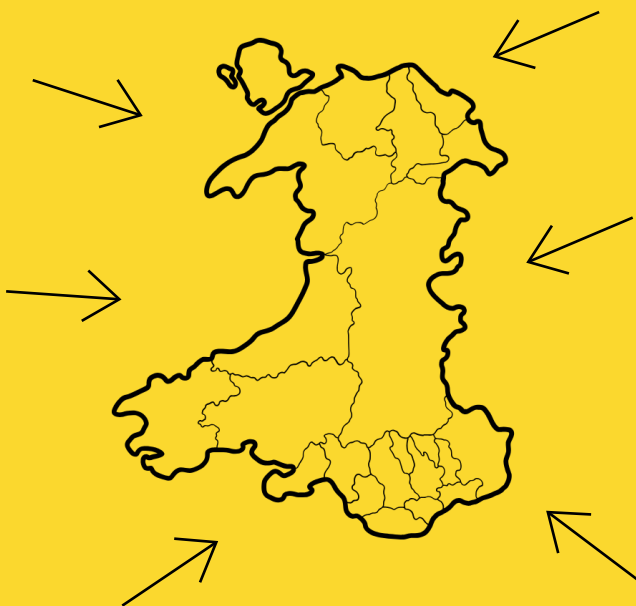
# Introduction

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The Spotted x Ring Pulse is a bi-annual research report into the community sport sector right across the UK, based on surveying groups and organisations at a grassroots level who deliver physical activity for young people. It explores the needs, challenges and sustainability of these clubs, highlighting the issues they face and informing decisions by ensuring their voices are heard.

It aims to:

- Inform others about the issues and opportunities facing community sports groups.
- Increase awareness of funding and resources available for such organisations.
- Help stakeholders make more informed decisions in relation to grassroots sport in the UK.
- Fill an insight gap on behalf of those who aren't 'traditional' sports clubs or who don't work as commercial or leisure providers.



This report represents the voices of **16** community group leaders from across Wales, representing around 7% of Spotted groups in the country, between **11 – 28 November 2024**. These groups reach around 1,000 young people across Wales.







# About Sported

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As the UK's largest grassroots sports charity, Sported resources groups in communities across the country, supporting around a million young people each year to overcome barriers to reach their full potential. The groups which Sported supports are deeply rooted within their communities and led by highly committed, passionate local people who often give up their time voluntarily to run initiatives that help young people to succeed. However, grassroots groups are often under-funded and under-resourced. As a charity, our role is to champion and empower the local heroes running these groups by providing much-needed professional expertise, resources and operational support, free of charge, to help their group survive and thrive.

Sported's groups work within complex local contexts, often tackling some of society's biggest challenges. Around 51% are located in areas that sit within the highest three indices of relative deprivation in the UK, almost two-thirds are volunteer-led, and a third have an annual turnover of less than £10,000.

# Key Findings

## Empowering groups in the long-term

Community groups are confident of continuing to deliver for their communities in the upcoming six months, but their confidence in longer-term survival over the next few years is lower. Securing funding and supporting more young people to participate are common priorities for community groups, along with responding to the specific challenges faced by young people in their local area. Continuing to support groups with access to funding and capacity-building resources is therefore critical in developing their resilience and ensuring longer-term sustainability so they can engage more young people within their communities.

	<p>Groups remain confident in their survival in the immediate future, but <b>confidence decreases as they look beyond the next six months</b>: 73% are confident in continuing to exist in three years' time compared with 100% in six months' time.</p>
	<p><b>Securing funding remains the most common priority for community groups</b>, with 88% of leaders saying it's a priority for the next six months.</p>
<p>Other key strategic priorities over the next six months include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>engaging new participants</b> (69%)</li> <li>→ <b>responding to local challenges faced by young people</b> (56%)</li> <li>→ <b>planning for the future</b> (50%)</li> <li>→ and <b>volunteer recruitment/retention</b> (44%).</li> </ul>





## Supporting physical and mental health for young people

Community groups are vital in helping young people from under-served communities to get active, delivering both physical and broader wellbeing benefits for their participants. However, mental health remains an issue for young people within our groups' local areas, and challenges around the cost of activities and young people's ability to get to activities are causing some young people to disengage from sport and physical activity. It's therefore critical to support and empower community groups as they deliver accessible activities for young people and bring such positive outcomes for their wellbeing.







## 100%

Every group told us they help get inactive young people active.



Beside the physical benefits of sport and physical activity, group leaders see young people benefiting from

	Improved mental health		Increased sense of belonging
	Improved confidence and self-esteem		Reduced loneliness and isolation

through taking part at community groups.





## But the cost of taking part is affecting young people:

- Alongside mental health, **immediate financial hardship**, including cost-of-living increases, was the joint most reported challenge for young people in their communities (38%)
- With more than half of respondents (56%) saying **young people at their group disengaged from/reduced participation in sport and physical activity in the last six months because of not being able to afford it**
- Young people are also struggling to get to activities, with nearly half of group leaders (44%) saying being **unable to travel to activities was a factor in young people limiting or stopping participation recently.**





**Our young people gain confidence and social skills when working as a team. Physical activity also improves their overall wellbeing.**

- DRMZ - Carmarthen Youth Project



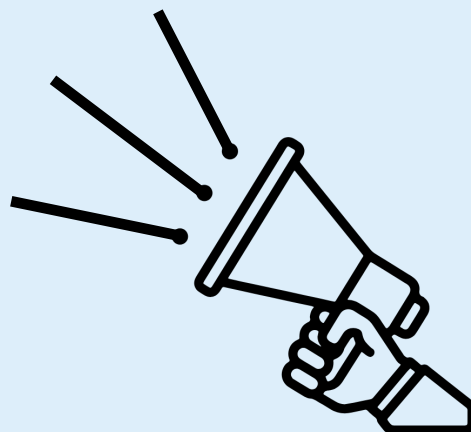
**Keeping fit: happy body corroborates with a happy mind.**

-Brighter Futures



**Promoting togetherness, sharing life skills to jump life's hurdles, and community coherence.**

- Impetus Dance CIC



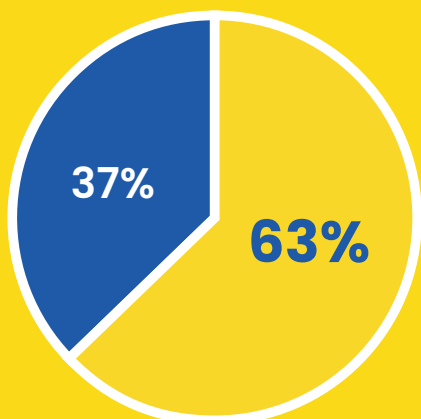


## Empowering communities

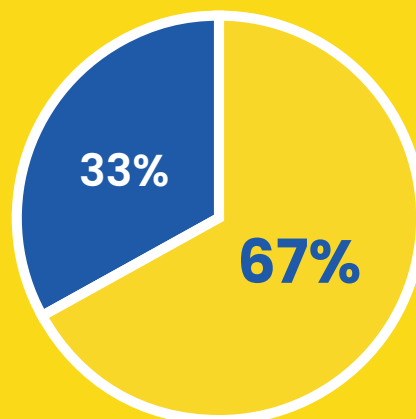


### Empowering communities

Groups are connected and part of decision-making within their communities but feel that their communities are missing out on investment in sport and physical activity given the positive and long-lasting impact it has for local areas. Community group leaders are keen to encourage sports ministers across the UK to support more investment into community sport and physical activity, ensuring the benefits are accessible for all young people regardless of background and circumstances.



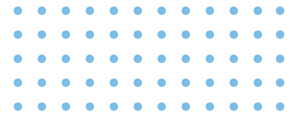
Two-thirds of respondents agree (definitely or tend to) that **they personally can influence decisions affecting their local area** (63%). 37% disagree that they can do so.



The majority of groups (67%) say **there isn't enough government investment into grassroots sport to back its impact at community level**. The rest weren't sure, with no group agreeing there's enough.



## Empowering communities



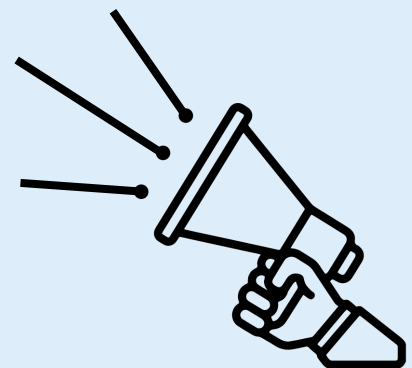
### Asked what they'd like to raise with their Wales' Sports Minister, groups mentioned:

- increasing funding for grassroots and community sport
- creating a more equitable funding model with more focus on community groups and their needs (as well as a wider variety of activities and sports)
- the affordability and accessibility of venues and facilities
- the equality of and increase in access to sport and physical activities

### ? What people want to ask the Nations Sport Ministers

**"How does the minister propose to address the decline in sports participation?"**

**"How are you making sports accessible for all?"**





## Impact of climate change



Community groups are seeing the impact of climate change on their activities, with flooded and waterlogged pitches and venues impacting on activities in the last six months.

The most common issues are around **flooded or waterlogged venues/pitches.**

**More than a third of respondents (38%) said their group's activities were impacted by climate change in the past six months.**

62% said they weren't.



### Hear how climate change affects our members



**In the last two years we have played on our home ground once! This is due to a waterlogged pitch and not having sufficient lighting to be able to play or train in the evenings.**

- Mochdre Lionesses



**Park activities cancelled due to rain and our garden project was also affected by rain.**

- DRMZ – Carmarthen Youth Project



**Pitches at two of our training sights have been flooded extensively for several weeks at a time.**

-Shotton Town United JFC



## Venues and facilities

Safe, secure and good quality venues and spaces are vital for groups to deliver for young people in their communities. However, groups face challenges around the availability of facilities and spaces, as well as the costs of running, owning, and maintaining such venues. Supporting groups with these challenges, especially in developing financially sustainable spaces, will help ensure they can continue to support young people within their communities over the long term.

**56%**

Half of respondents told us that **maintenance and upkeep and/or running costs for those owning** are significant challenges facing groups.

**44%**

**Accessibility of facilities for participants**

**31%**

**Limited Space**

**31%**

**Availability of facilities** were also reported as significant challenges by nearly half of respondents.



## Groups are most interested in support around:



**56%**

**financial sustainability and revenue generation**  
for their facilities and venues,



**31%**

with around a third of respondents looking for **capital project planning assistance**



**25%**

A quarter of respondents are looking for support around **community asset transfers**



**25%**

**facility management and maintenance**



**25%**

**and/or making their spaces more accessible**

# Our response

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Our Spring 2024 edition of Pulse allowed us to:

- Understand the current needs, issues and jeopardy surrounding grassroots sport and its impact in our communities – and how Sported best supports that.
- Engage every parliamentarian across the UK, as well as key parts of local and national government, and advocate on behalf of our groups, highlighting the huge collective impact they make on their communities and on young people in tandem with calls for further support and engagement.
- Deepen our connections in the Statutory sector, among devolved government, regional agencies and other charities in order to highlight the effective and revenue-efficient role that community-focused organisations can play in delivering local solutions to local problems through channels of activity which reach audiences who are either hard to reach or simply over-looked.
- To engage the national and regional media to amplify the issues at stake surrounding grassroots sport and young people, spotlighting the research and, significantly, telling the powerful stories of our members and allowing their voices to be heard.
- To open doors for new or extended conversations with corporate partners, illustrating the difference they can make by supporting the sport for development sector and the areas of involvement open to them.





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