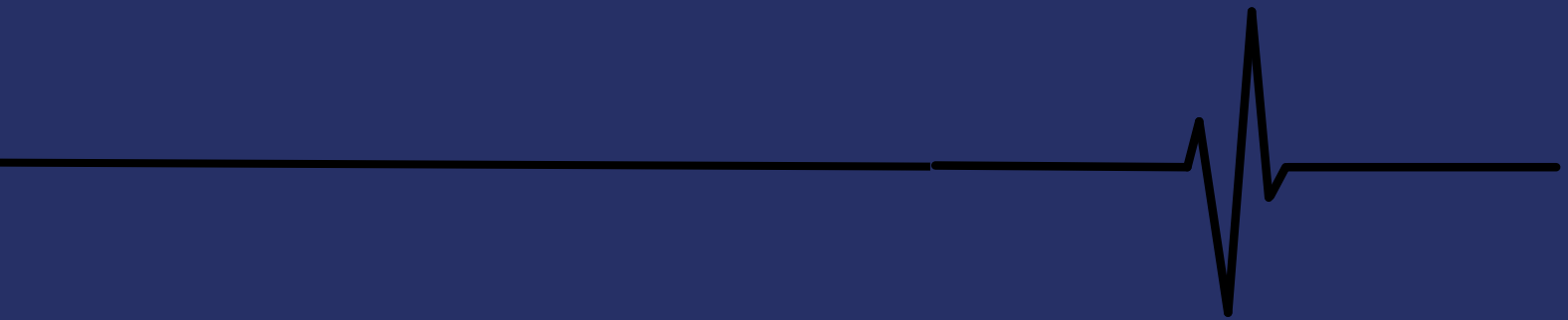


Community Pulse

Tracking the health, hopes, and hurdles of grassroots sport.

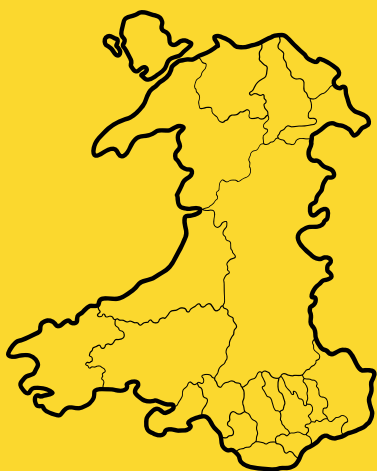


Introduction

The Community Pulse is Sported's longitudinal study of community groups across the UK who deliver sport and physical activity for underserved young people and adults. It covers the sustainability, needs, and ambitions of such groups, ensuring the voice of grassroots and smaller community organisations are heard.

It aims to:

- ⇒ Capture and reflect the experiences of our community organisations.
- ⇒ Explore the realities, needs and aspirations of these community organisations.
- ⇒ Provide an authentic, unbiased voice for our community organisations.
- ⇒ Help stakeholders make more informed decisions in relation to grassroots sport in the UK.



This report represents the voices of 26 community group leaders from across Wales, representing around 7% of the Sported network, between 6–21 October 2025. These groups reach around 2,755 people across Wales.



About Sported

Sported combats inequality through the UK's largest network of community sports groups, supporting over one million people to overcome barriers to reach their full potential. Our role is to 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 young people thrive.


Our 5,000+ grassroots groups reaching more than 1 million people every year, provide safety, belonging and opportunity where it's needed most. Sported groups work within complex local contexts, often tackling some of society's biggest challenges. Around 50% are in areas that sit within the highest three indices of relative deprivation in the UK, around four-in-ten are volunteer-led, and a third have an annual turnover of less than £10,000.



Key Findings

Empowering groups in the short and long-term

Funding remains a central priority for community groups, continuing a three-year trend, with the majority of leaders focused on it in both the short and longer term. Alongside this, groups are prioritising engaging and retaining participants, planning for the future, and recruiting and retaining volunteers. While these priorities largely remain consistent over time, confidence in long-term sustainability is lower, with significantly fewer leaders confident about their group’s survival in three years compared with the next six months, highlighting ongoing uncertainty about the future.

	<p>Groups remain confident in their survival in the immediate future, but confidence slightly decreases as they look beyond the next six months: 84% are confident they will continue to exist in six months time, compared to 62% who are confident in continuing to exist in three years’ time.</p>
	<p>As has been the case for the past three years, funding is a common priority for community groups, with 85% of leaders saying its a priority over the next six months, and 73% of leaders saying it’s a priority over the next three years.</p>
<p>Other key strategic priorities over the next six months include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging new participants (88%) • retaining participants (77%) • Planning for the future (73%) • Volunteer recruitment/retention (65%)



Fighting inactivity



Around two-thirds of groups are supporting inactive young people and adults to become more active. Leaders highlight inclusive provision, mental health and personal development support, and structured sessions as effective ways to engage young people, while safe, encouraging and inclusive environments are key for adults. However, affordability and confidence remain significant barriers for young people, with half of groups reporting reduced participation due to cost and low confidence, and many also citing mental health challenges as a limiting factor.

65%

Two thirds are getting inactive adults active.

69%

Two thirds of groups told us they get inactive young people active



The most common approaches that work well in getting young people active include:

- ✓ Offering inclusive provision (e.g. girls sessions, different abilities).
- ✓ Mental health and personal development.
- ✓ Structured/regular sessions.
- ✓ Reducing financial barriers to taking part.



But the cost of activities and lack of confidence in taking part is limiting young people's participation:



Half of respondents (50%) say 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.



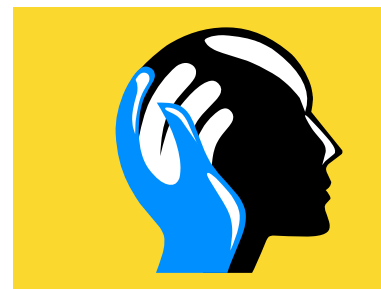
Young people also have reduced confidence in taking part, with half of group leaders (50%) saying this was a factor in young people limiting or stopping participation recently.



Mental health problems following closely behind (46%).

Mental Health

Mental health is the most significant challenge facing both young people and adults in communities, alongside a lack of opportunities, unsafe or inadequate spaces, and wider economic inequality. Over half of group leaders have been approached by young people with mental health concerns in the past year, highlighting the growing pressure on community groups to provide support beyond sport. Leaders say better training for coaches, clearer information on local services, and dedicated funding for mental health initiatives are essential to respond effectively.



Mental health is the most reported challenge that young people (77%) and adults (85%) are facing in their community at this time.

58%

Over half of group leaders said they had been approached by young people with mental health concerns in the last 12 months.





To be able to support young people better with their mental health, group leaders say they need:

58%	Training specifically for coaches
42%	Clear information on local services
35%	Funding specifically for mental health initiatives



Inequalities

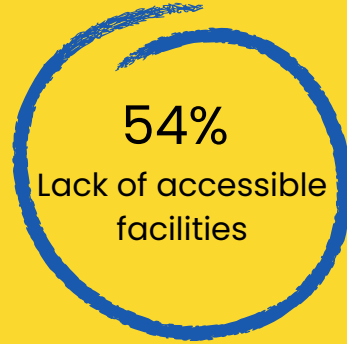
The most commonly reported issues affecting participation and engagement were:

Women and girls

Disabled People

Ethnically Diverse Communities

LGBTQ+



Across different groups, leaders highlight a range of barriers that limit participation in sport and physical activity. Below highlights other commonly reported issues for these participants include:

Women & Girls	Awareness of opportunities Negative past experiences
Disabled People	Awareness of opportunities Competing demands
Ethnically Diverse Communities	Barriers to communication Cultural or religious considerations
LGBTQ+	Negative past experiences Lack of confidence from individuals to participate

Opportunities for getting young people active

Group leaders see strong opportunities to engage young people over the next year through diversifying activities, facility enhancement and strengthening partnerships, with a specific focus on introducing women and girls to sport at an early age.



Group leaders reflected on what opportunities they see for engaging young people in sport and physical activity in the next 12 months:



Diversifying activities



We are concentrating in the short term on women and girls aged 8-13 to try and introduce them to sport and hopefully build a more long term connection with the club.
(GISDA - Wales)



Make it more accessible and promote it within our Senior schools. (North Wales Gliding Club - Wales)



Increasing Partnerships



If we get a new venue then we could expand exponentially. (Vale of Glamorgan Wheelchair Rugby - Wales)



Facility Enhancement

Supporting groups to succeed in these opportunities





More funding

Better access to facilities

More staff

To make the most of these opportunities, leaders highlight the need for additional staff, funding, and improved access to facilities. Funding would primarily support venue hire, equipment, coaching, and volunteer development. However, group leaders note challenges around limited capacity, time pressures, and uneven access to funding, which often restricts success in applying for funding.

More funding is vital for groups to support with:

	Facility hire/access to venues (50%)
	Equipment (e.g. balls, nets, mats, kit) (46%)
	Coach or instructor fees (27%)
	Volunteer training or development (27%)

Wales Opportunities

Groups in Wales identified volunteer recruitment, skills development, and improved reward and recognition as the areas where immediate support would make the biggest difference to strengthening governance and leadership. Many groups depend on rented facilities, with relatively few owning or leasing their own spaces, which highlights ongoing concerns about secure and consistent access. Reflecting these challenges, group leaders are calling on the Wales Sports Minister to prioritise increased investment in sports infrastructure to support more inclusive, stable, and well-structured sporting opportunities.

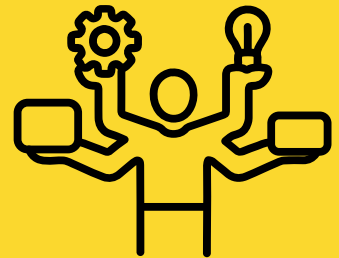


Groups said the support that would make the biggest difference in volunteer governance and leadership includes:

Immediate support in recruitment



Upskilling



Reward and recognition



“This club is important because it's a safe and happy space for LGBTQIA women to enjoy sport together in a friendly and safe environment. It gives us community, purpose, fitness and routine which helps keep us happier and healthier. We're a slightly rag tag bunch who are largely the types who can struggle a bit more socially, but we have found valuable and quality friendships in one another through this club and sport. I've found it really hard to find that, so this is a very special and helpful space for all of us, and I'm sure for many more to come.”

“The club has given a opportunity for young people and adults to have a safe place to train and enjoy the community the club has built. The club has given children from the surrounding areas the chance to box for a club with huge support from parents and friends. The look on some boxers faces when they step into the ring win or lose is priceless. Some boxers have said it was the best day of their lives.”

We asked group leaders what they'd like to raise with Wales's Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, they mentioned:



Investment in infrastructure allowing more inclusive and structured sporting opportunities.





Our response

The findings from this year's report give us a clear mandate: community sport in Wales is playing a vital role in supporting physical activity and wellbeing, but it is under increasing pressure from funding challenges, volunteer capacity constraints and limited access to suitable facilities.

Our response will focus on strengthening sustainability and leadership across the sector. With funding remaining the top priority for groups in both the short and long term, we will enhance our direct grant support while helping groups access wider funding opportunities and build confidence in areas such as bid writing and long-term planning. Alongside this, we will prioritise volunteer development by supporting recruitment, upskilling and recognition, including leading the Wales Strategic Volunteering Project to strengthen governance and leadership capacity.

Improving access and reducing inequalities will also be central to our work. With most groups reliant on rented facilities and facing challenges around availability and affordability, we will work with partners to improve access to spaces, equipment and staffing. We will also support groups to expand inclusive provision and address the specific barriers faced by women and girls, disabled people, ethnically diverse communities and LGBTQ+ participants. In response to growing mental health needs, we will provide clearer signposting to local services and advocate for dedicated funding to better support groups in this area, while continuing to ensure the voices of Welsh community groups are represented in national conversations around infrastructure and investment.

Ultimately, our response is focused on ensuring that community sport in Wales can continue to thrive while becoming more inclusive and accessible. By strengthening the capacity of grassroots organisations, improving access to funding and facilities, and tackling the barriers that limit participation, we aim to create more equal opportunities so that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, can take part, benefit and feel a sense of belonging through sport.



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2025