

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

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# **The Covid-19 Pandemic's Impact on London's Community Sport Sector and its Response**

Sports Unites and the Major Events Engagement Fund

February 2021



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## Acronyms

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	MLB	Major League Baseball
BCOMS	Black Collective of Media in Sport	NDTi	National Development Team for Inclusion
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport	PMLD	People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
FBB	Football Beyond Borders	ROI	Return on Investment
FINA	Federation Internationale de Natatio	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
GLA	Greater London Authority	SFDC	Sport for Development Coalition
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	SMWG	Shared Measurement Working Group
IMM	Impact Measurement Management	UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
KPI	Key Performance Indicator	WHO	World Health Organisation
IOC	International Olympic Committee	YCSN	Your City Says No
LCRF	London Community Response Fund	YLF	Young Londoners Fund
MATP	Motor Activity Training Programme		
MCL	Model City London		
MEEF	Major Events Engagement Fund		
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning		

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This report on the Sport Unites investment programme and Major Events Engagement Fund (MEEF) was commissioned by the Mayor of London's Community Sport team in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure:

- The challenges faced by the community sport sector are captured.
- The impact is measured.
- The learnings by the sector in responding and adapting to the crisis are garnered.

This is with a view to ensuring the sector is capable of first 'bouncing back' to pre-Covid-19 levels of implementation and progress, whilst also considering how the sector can 'build back better' to ensure a more resilient and equitable future for community sport in the future.

## The Impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 caused all major sporting events hosted in London to be cancelled or postponed to dates in 2021. Six major sporting events with Greater London Authority (GLA) funded community engagement activities were cancelled, postponed or adapted to be held online. The community sport sector initially responded by going into 'survival' mode, as office buildings and facilities were closed and staff furloughed.

Several organisations, including Sport England, the Sport for Development Coalition, Street Games, Sported and the Mayor of London's Community Sport team conducted research on the impact of Covid-19 on the sector. This included an online survey with 262 responses and risk forms from 57 grantees, outlining the issues and risks they faced and any adaptations that needed to be made to their GLA-funded programmes. The research found:

- 94% organisations are concerned that they are unable to meet their targets / outcomes.
- 46% of organisations had accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, with 35% placing over half of all staff on furlough.

- 10% of organisations reported that they had to make redundancies.
- 41% of organisations accessed financial support from various government assistance schemes or a Covid-19 response fund grant from a funding body.
- 59% reported that they did not receive any emergency funding.
- 16 key risks were highlighted by organisations via the risk forms, with the most reported being the inability to deliver activities and thus achieve outcomes (94%) and concerns about the wellbeing and safety of participants (29%).
- Organisations are anxious about their service now and in the future.
- Londoners have been less active and have had fewer opportunities to be active.
- Organisations are concerned that participants will be nervous about the risks of returning to sport.
- Public areas are busy and with limited facilities open, including toilets, during lockdown.
- Two organisations have reported that young people were being approached by gangs as they exercised in public spaces.
- At the start of the pandemic, community sport leaders reported more than twice the anxiety levels of the previous year.
- 59% of organisations are concerned about participants maintaining their wellbeing.
- Inequalities in terms of technology and access to affordable internet are now more apparent.

## 'Coping' – The Response to Covid-19

The Mayor of London was a signatory of the London Funders joint statement pledging to offer support to civil society groups affected by Covid-19. This included contributing £7.6 million to date to the London Community Response Fund (LCRF).

Adaptions were made for new Stronger Communities, Model City London (MCL),



London Together, Active Londoners, and Young Londoners Fund (YLF) Summer Activities grant streams. A series of talks were set up with London Sport entitled 'Talking Covid' to support the sector with up-to-date practical information, informed advice and guidance. 677 individuals attended the talks.

Sport Unites grantees reported their responses to the pandemic via risk forms, with the majority (88%) moving sessions online and keeping in regular contact with participants (56%). Half (50%) stated that they had collaborated with other organisations.

Case studies highlighted how traditional sport organisations adapted to support the community and how community centred organisations utilised sport and physical activity networks to:

- Provide delivery services for food, medicine and essential supplies to those at risk and unable to travel or who were isolating at home.
- Establish food banks, often in collaboration with other community organisations.
- Provide services and equipment to those at risk and for key / NHS workers.
- Provide mental health and befriending services.
- Develop resources for participants at home to maintain their physical and mental health.

### **'Adapting' – Returning to Delivery**

The crisis demonstrated the sector's over-reliance on traditional data collection methods. Some organisations focused attention on impact measurement and management, knowing that evidencing their impact would be vital in securing future funding. The Sports Unites Learning Community was launched to share best practice from organisations and learn from failure, as well as success. During the 'Insight fortnight', a dedicated webinar on how to conduct impact measurement and management during the pandemic was held, and a series of meetings with the wider community sport sector were conducted.

The Mayor of London, Comic Relief and inFocus put together guidance revealing the

different approaches London Together grantees have taken in returning to delivery. The guide provides tips for others on how to move out of lock-down, how to consider government restrictions and associated guidance and how to take a 'hybrid' approach, combining both online and face-to-face activities.

In June / July 2020, the Mayor of London's Community Sport team funded a pilot to deliver socially distanced sport in Hackney. A toolkit for practitioners and a case study were produced. The key findings / learnings were:

- The number of days engaged in physical activity increased by the end of the project.
- All participants reported feeling safe during the sessions. Observations showed how everyone maintained safe distances from others and good hygiene. By the end of the pilot, no unsafe physical contact between participants was observed.
- The life satisfaction and wellbeing of participants increased from pre-project to post-project. The pilot had a positive impact on the feelings of loneliness.
- A strong network of organisations with good relationships meant it was possible to establish the necessary means to work collaboratively and respond within a short space of time.
- Schools offer a safe venue for community sport at any time, regardless of a lockdown.

### **'Building Back Better' – Transforming Community Sport in London**

The inherent dynamics of both the social sector and community sport present both challenges and opportunities for significant change to occur. If the sector is to be successful at delivering positive outcomes at sufficient scale that have a meaningful impact at a London-wide level, systems and structures need to be developed that help to align everyone's individual efforts. The community sport sector must look for new ways to work together to tackle change and establish its role as a powerful asset for catalysing social transformation in the post-Covid era. A collective approach to building resilience and

'building back better' together, starting with a shared measurement initiative, is proposed. Whilst the results can be fruitful, it will demand an increasingly well-coordinated, cross sector 'systemic' response from a broad coalition of London stakeholders, if it is to generate both the scale and breadth of impact upon social issues experienced by Londoners.

## Shared Measurement

As public sector funding is set to come under huge strain following the pandemic and its subsequent fall-out, funders and social innovators need better ways of assessing the relative success of community sport initiatives to embed themselves in their community more effectively or to scale up, if appropriate and desired. Shared measurement can result in improved efficiencies and effectiveness for the community sport sector. This will help to improve standards in relation to impact measurement and management; create savings in terms of costs and time; reduce duplication in reporting efforts; allow beneficiaries to be tracked through multiple services and interventions, and; encourage organisations to think about collective impact and social change. The Mayor's Community Sport team can take a leading role in the design, development, and deployment of a shared measurement approach.

## Conclusions

Research conducted by the Mayor of London and others collectively demonstrates an array of responses to the pandemic, but networking and collaboration, both formal and informal, have been highly beneficial throughout this whole period. Through their grassroots, place-based connections and understanding of the issues within their communities, coupled with the trust and esteem they have built up with those they serve, community sport sector organisations provide valuable services. They are adaptable to the methods and mechanisms they deliver through and can help those who are not able to access other, mainstream systems of support. They collaborate with other organisations and find new ways of delivering essential services. Whilst there has been a sense of 'solidarity in a crisis', many are seeing

the benefits of working in different ways and looking at how they can apply some of what they have learnt to their work in the future, even once the pandemic is over.

The hope is this report starts a dialogue for how those involved with the community sport sector in London can best utilise this important asset to create transformational change and a better future for Londoners.

## Recommendations

The Mayor's community sport team should alter their **strategic approach** to:

- Provide support, training, and funding for organisations to return to delivery.
- Review, update and merge the common theory of change for both Sport Unites and MEEF.
- Direct funding to test new models and ways of working, which provide insight for the wider sector.

Sector activities should be redesigned for **accessibility and return to delivery** in the following ways:

- Grantees to have risk assessments in place, outlining alternative provisions.
- Technology utilised to enhance activities, including the use of digital platforms for online sessions.
- Hybrid approaches for online and live sessions considered.
- Training implemented in technology and digital platforms for the workforce and beneficiaries.
- Build upon the recommendations from the Social Distanced Sport Pilot.
- The Mayor of London to lobby government to support the community sport sector further.

New considerations for **safeguarding** to reflect:

- The risk of crime and personal safety / hygiene in the unregulated spaces of parks and recreation grounds to socialise and exercise.
- The risk to personal safety and online grooming in the use of digital platforms and

social media for those home alone and young people.

Simplified, aligned and **collaborative funding mechanisms**, systems and processes for the community sport sector should be further explored.

- The Mayor's Community Sport team can look at actively engaging with the corporate / private sector for corporate social responsibility partnerships and to support social enterprises and create sustainable business models.

The Mayor's Community Sport team should consider taking full ownership of and expanding the '**Sport Unites Learning Community**'. The Learning community can act as:

- A membership platform that incorporates any London community sport organisation.
- A showcase for research, impact and advocacy for the sector.
- A platform for sharing events.

The Mayor of London should also consider the utilisation of different **influential champions** to

help advocate for and support the wider community sport sector.

A way to build the capacity of London community sport sector organisations and evidence impact is through **expanding Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) training** to incorporate all London community sport sector organisations. In doing so, they will collectively build capacity to evidence impact. Completion of the IMM training can also be a requirement / consideration for those applying for GLA funding.

The Mayor's Community Sport team should coordinate a pan-London coalition of organisations to create a framework for **shared measurement** and management practices to determine the success of London-wide community sport efforts and inform decision making processes.

An important early step in the process will be to reach out to all actors, to both advise of the intentions towards shared measurement, outlining the main drivers, and enlist their future support and 'buy-in' to the process.



Photo Credit: Graham Spacey, inFocus



## Introduction

This report on the Sport Unites investment programme and Major Events Engagement Fund (MEEF) was commissioned in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure the impact and the challenges faced by the community sport sector are captured, as well as the learnings by the sector in responding and adapting to the crisis over the first six months are garnered. This is with a view to ensuring the sector is capable of first 'bouncing back' to pre-Covid-19 levels of implementation and progress after the 2021 lockdown ends, whilst also considering how the sector can 'build back better' to ensure a more resilient and equitable future for community sport in the future.

The Mayor of London's 'Sport Unites' investment fund focuses on utilising sport and physical activity to tackle the key issues of inactivity; mental health; social isolation; social mixing, and; serious youth violence. Funds are granted for activities that help build the capacity of the community sport sector workforce to better address these issues. The MEEF programme is aligned to the Mayor's sport strategy and seeks to support high quality projects that do more than enhance the experience for those with affinity to sport. It tests and explores different approaches that use the staging of a major sports event to: encourage those not engaged with sport to take part in local opportunities; support them to address key social issues in their community, and; encourage the development of habitual, regular participation.

The crisis has affected everyone, from individuals, small community interest groups and charities to pan-London / national networks, governing bodies and local authorities. Many have reflected on the value of community sport within communities as a resource in a time of crisis and non-crisis. Community sport in London generally serves several functions: Sport for all – in terms providing a range of activities for everyone to encourage participation and tackle inactivity; Sport for development and peace – the intentional use of sport towards specific social / health / economic outcomes for targeted

populations and communities, and; sport development – talent identification and personal growth / progress of individuals within sport in terms of sporting technique / ability and soft skills such as leadership and communication (Keane, 2020). For all, it has meant a serious re-think into how to deliver meaningful activities for beneficiaries, given the restrictions in place and the changing landscape of social issues for Londoners because of Covid-19, as well as the changing policy landscape and likely availability of future resources for the sector. Following an increase in collaboration between organisations and a focus on new ways of working and supporting others, there is now a growing desire within London's community sport sector to think about reform and how the sector can re-establish itself and 'build back better'.



The contribution that sport and physical activity has within society is often taken for granted, and limited opportunities to train, play, or compete in sport or even take daily exercise has led to many reflecting on what is truly important. It also provides an opportunity for those responsible for the governance of sport and physical activity to review and reform the systems that support its implementation. In an address to the United Nations, Dr. Mohanned Arabiat from Generations for Peace called the Covid-19 pandemic a "*stress test*" which

showed up, “glaring deficiencies in many of our systems at international, national, sub-national, community and household level”. Many are now advocating for the governance of elite sport at the global level to use Covid-19 as a catalyst for reform and transformation, including democratic processes and transparency in leadership and decision making; validated and accountable institutions, and; institutions to review their purpose and priorities (Sugden and Sugden, 2020). There is a call to reconceptualise sport as consisting of several dimensions with differing outcomes (sport for development and peace, sport for all, sport development and elite sport provision), along one single continuum, interlinked and working together (Keane, 2020). Similarly, reflections and reform should be considered at local and regional levels to ensure governance and systems are targeted, equitable, efficient, supportive, and resilient. Transformation, therefore, *“requires personal and structural intervention and engagement in the processes of change”* (Burdsey, Carter & Doidge and 2018, p5).

The Major Event Engagement Fund is an attempt to bring elite sport provision in line with local community needs, with programmes designed to encourage participation in sport and to address certain ‘development’ issues linked to the Sport Unites investment programme. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee are seeking views on sport within communities and wish to identify, *“specific actions the government can take to guarantee the future survival of the community sports sector”* (UK Parliament 2020). It is actively looking into the governance of community sport, funding and how the elite sector can support grassroots sport. Sport England and UK Sport are also undergoing a joint review of their Code for Sports Governance, which will, “focus on areas that can help promote diversity” (Sport England 2020) and use insight and learning of current best practice to inform the new code.

### What does it mean for the community sport sector in London to be resilient?

Resilience of the community sport system in London is the ‘capacity’ it must anticipate, how

to cope, adapt and transform in the face of shocks and stresses, and how to continue to function effectively. These capacities are highly contextual and will differ between stakeholders and programming areas /priorities. Resilience is understood as the *“capacity of individuals, families, communities, organisations, and institutions existing in their different political, social, economic, health and environmental contexts”* (Seaman et al. 2014). It recognises that there are different elements that make up resilience: coping, adaptive and transformative:

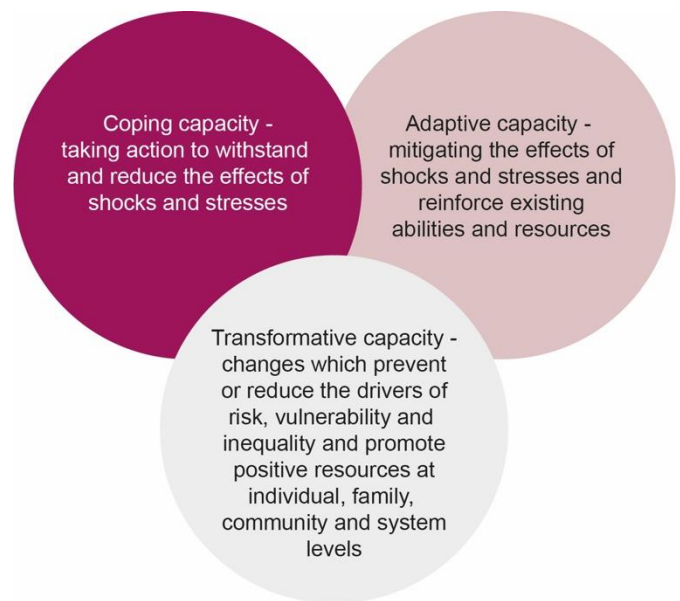


Figure 1: Elements of Resilience

**Coping capacity** is needed to address ongoing shocks, reduce vulnerability, and prevent inequality from becoming entrenched. It creates sufficient stability for planned adaptive and transformative change. This includes the ability of organisations to respond to local needs in a crisis, such as setting up a food bank or utilising and coordinating volunteers to deliver food and medicine to those in most need.

**Adaptive capacity** is required to adjust to ongoing change and uncertainty, given that systems do not remain stable for long. It is the ability to change delivery systems and activities to ensure that participants are still benefiting from achieving the intended outcomes of a project / programme of work. For example, having online delivery, providing equipment to do activity at home or in an isolated, safe

space, or adapting activities so they can continue within social distance restrictions.

**Transformative capacity** should consider new risks and challenges that transformative changes may cause, and respond to immediate needs, alongside pursuing longer-term objectives. This includes learning and sharing what coping strategies and adaptations have been successful and recognise what could be adopted to enhance future practice.

## Report Structure

This report is divided into five sections. The first outlines Covid-19's impact on the community sport sector, with a short academic literature review and evidence gathered from Sported's Community Pulse research, GLA project risk analysis forms completed by Sport Unites and MEEF grantees, and interviews with grantees. Bearing in mind the second Sport Unites status report, which outlined the activities and results achieved prior to the national lockdown, this section endeavours to give an estimation of the effect on funded work and the resilience of different parts of the sector to withstand the shocks and stresses introduced.

The second section looks at the initial 'coping' response of both the community sport sector and the Mayor's Community Sport team to the pandemic. It explores how the Mayor of London has responded via emergency funding and leadership in terms of how the sector can start to adapt and transform itself to the new conditions faced in order to avert the further reinforcement of social and health inequalities. It also highlights example case studies of how traditional sport organisations have adapted to support the community and how community organisations are utilising networks developed through sport and physical activity.

The third section focuses on how the sector is adapting to adhere to social restrictions and implement return to play measures. It provides

some indication towards how the sector might build upon these successes further, but also go even further to transform the sector to be more resilient. It highlights the key findings and learning from the socially distanced sport pilot project and the Insight Fortnight – a series of five meetings between the community sport sector and the Mayor of London's Community Sport team. The platform enables multiple voices to share their good practices and insights from the delivery of social outcomes through sport and physical activity in the context of Covid-19. It ends by highlighting example case studies of organisations adapting to the crisis.

The fourth section looks at how London's community sport sector can be more resilient, robust and prepared in a crisis, whilst being sustainable and accessible. The focus shifts to how Covid-19 can be an opportunity for transformation. It outlines some of the challenges that currently exist for the sector and a vision for what the future might look like and how the sector might 'build back better'. The section utilises existing theory to support potential new ways of working, exploring the sorts of conditions that need to be put in place to reduce the drivers of risk and vulnerability of the sector and achieve greater resilience in the future.

The final section concludes by proposing a strategic framework for action towards shared measurement. It provides a set of action-oriented recommendations that move towards greater levels of inter-agency collaboration and agreement and a common monitoring and evaluation framework. The pan-London framework ensures grass-roots agency and encourages the Mayor's Community Sport team to play a prominent role to ensure the effective use of sport for social outcomes. It can also serve as a model for other cities. Questions are posed and recommendations are offered to act as a catalyst for discussion on the future of community sport in London.



## Section 1: The Impact of Covid-19

Historically, sport has been regarded as, “an indispensable building block of the good society” (Malik 2020) and contributes to, *“identity, pride, hope”* (Malik, 2020) and, ultimately, a sense of belonging. It acts, *“as a crucial buttress for our physical and mental health, gives us something to identify with, and links us to a wider community or commonwealth; either face-to-face interaction or in online abstraction”* (Sugden & Sugden 2020, p158). It is recognised at the highest global level as, *“an important enabler of sustainable development”*, with a, *“growing contribution to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect”* (United Nations 2020, p2). Engagement with sport and physical activity, be it participating or spectating (live or online), is often a common denominator for starting conversations with and / or socialising with others.

Over a three-year period, Sport England looked at evidence on the contribution of community sport and physical activity to five outcome areas identified in the Government’s strategy ‘Sporting Future’: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development (Sheffield Hallam University, 2020). The aim was to determine the extent of the contribution of community sport and physical activity to the outcomes and to quantify its social and economic impact. The research revealed that the combined social and economic value of taking part (participating and volunteering) in community sport and physical activity in England in 2017/18 was £85.5bn. When broken down, this included significant contributions of £42 billion to the mental wellbeing of people and social and community development (including fewer crime incidents), which equated to £20 billion. When these figures are offset by the £21.85 billion cost of engagement and providing sport and physical activity opportunities, it meant for every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity, a return on investment (ROI) of £3.91 was created for individuals and society in 2017/18. This demonstrates that not only is **investment**

**in social community sport and physical activity economically viable in terms of ROI** and impacting positively on the resources of other institutes such as the NHS and Police, it also has significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities.

Discovered in 2019, Covid-19 is a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which is highly infectious through human interaction. Its transmission has no regard for geography, and the pandemic has a global reach (Parnell *et al.* 2020, p1). The crisis has led to lockdowns, curfews, and social restrictions globally, and has meant the curtailment of sport and physical activity at both elite and grassroots levels. In the United Kingdom, mass gatherings began to be curtailed and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020, the country went into its first ‘lockdown’. Businesses were closed and except for essential services, people were told to stay at home and have no social contact with anyone. In England, people were allowed outdoors to exercise individually but could not participate in any organised physical activity or sport. Across the country, those not classed as essential workers either worked from home, became home schoolteachers, were furloughed or made redundant from their jobs. They spent their time in their homes, away from others, and following guidance given by the government. Scholars have pointed out that the repercussions of this are yet to be fully understood and that, *“this disruption has been uneven, unequal and frankly at times, unjust”* (Evans *et al.* 2020, p2). The pandemic has proven to be, *“a ‘stress-test’ for all human systems, which is showing-up glaring deficiencies in many of our systems at international, national, sub-national, community and household level”* (UNODC 2020). For grassroots community sport and physical activity programmes, lockdown meant the complete halt to almost all activities.

Emerging from the lockdown, it has become clear that the ‘key issues’ are now more acute for those already at-risk, and now a reality for many more people. For some organisations,



this represents a new challenge, as their activities and expertise to date has been focused on tackling specific issues. The last status report for Phase 1 of the Sport Unites investment programmes covered the period from March 2018 to the end of March 2020 and was written as the global Covid-19 pandemic was emerging. It acknowledged that widespread changes in the programmatic context across London were taking place, which had curtailed the vast majority of Sport Unites grantee activities. The report was, therefore, a cumulative reflection of the 225 grants Sport Unites grants and their work carried out across London since its' inception and up to the outbreak of the pandemic. It demonstrated that considerable progress had been made by grantees, with 80% of the 34,528 unique participants benefiting from one of Sport Unites intended outcomes.

### 1.1 The Impact on Sporting Events

It had already been proven that mass gatherings such as music festivals, religious assemblies and sporting events contribute to the spread of infectious diseases, and many governments moved quickly to ban large events (Memish *et al.* 2019). It was soon deemed that any form of social contact had unacceptable levels of risk, in terms of transmission of the virus onto others. In February 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued guidance to governments around mass gatherings in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak. It recognised that large events create many smaller gatherings and events where participants are not registered, cannot be / are not screened and may have travelled from infected areas. One of the key contributors to disease transmission is travel (Tian *et al.*, 2020) and London was due to host several matches of UEFA's Euro 2020 tournament at Wembley Stadium. This would have seen thousands of fans from across Europe and the world descend on London. Several other major events, each with a plethora of community engagement events under the Mayor of London's Major Event Engagement Fund (MEEF) were also scheduled across 2020. The hosting of any sporting competition or mass event in any UK city, *"would have been beyond irresponsible*

*given the heightened risk of spreading the Covid-19. Especially as these mega events already place great burdens of the public services of the host cities"* (Parnell *et al.* 2020, p4).

The impact on MEEF-related projects was greater because major events were postponed or cancelled, along with their associated community engagement events. Six major sporting events with GLA-funded community engagement activities were scheduled to run in 2020. The London Winter Wander in February 2020 had already been cancelled because of Storm Dennis. Only International Olympic Committee (IOC) European Olympic Boxing qualifiers were held, albeit behind closed doors with no spectators and before the announcement that the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games were postponed until 2021. The others were the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Men's European Football Championships (EURO 2020); the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA) World Diving Championships; the Major League Baseball (MLB) London Series; and the Street League Skateboarding World Championships.

### 1.2 The Impact on Community Sport

The community sport sector responded to government restrictions but for many, this meant going into 'survival' mode. Office buildings and facilities were locked up and many worked from home, attempting to engage with participants from a distance – online or via the telephone. Staff were furloughed and almost all had no choice but to suspend all activity. Below, we outline the findings from the research conducted by the Mayor of London's Community Sport team and provide summaries of the research conducted by other organisations. These independent studies not only help to validate the findings from the Mayor of London's Community Sport team, but also allow us to better understand the true extent of the effect of Covid-19 so far. The section ends with a summary that brings together the findings and conclusions of all research onto the impact of Covid-19 on the community sport sector in London.



The Mayor of London's Community Sport team conducted their own research. Organisations, many of which are past or present recipients of GLA funding, were asked to respond to an online survey. 262 responses were received. Existing Sport Unites grantees were asked to complete a risk form to outline the issues and risks they faced and any adaptations that needed to be made to their GLA-funded programmes, in terms of the level of impact the crisis may have on their output targets and intended outcomes. InFocus received risk forms from 48 organisations in March/April 2020, with another 9 completing forms in June/July 2020, with the prolonged lockdown restrictions and continued closure of facilities in place. At this point, 7 organisations also revised their original risk forms.

46% of the organisations that responded to the survey stated they had either applied for, or received, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) for their staff, with 35% of organisations placing over half of their staff on furlough. Almost all organisations had managed to retain their staff but 10% reported that they had to make redundancies. Unfortunately, one organisation – Consonant, receiving funding from the GLA and Comic Relief to support refugees and asylum seekers in Tottenham and Westminster – closed, as a direct result of significant financial difficulties exacerbated by the pandemic. Fortunately, some services have been transferred to other organisations, but it has meant the end of the London Together Project (Consonant, 2020). It is unclear, however, how many organisations will be able to continue once the furlough scheme ends.

Significant numbers also accessed government assistance including the business rates holiday scheme (31%), deferred VAT payments (18%); Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Time To Pay scheme (9%) or had taken out a government backed small business loan or grant (33%). In terms of other coronavirus-related financial support, 35% of organisations reported that they had received a Covid-19 response fund grant, including Sport England's Community Emergency Fund, the Charities Aid Foundation Coronavirus Emergency fund and the London Community response Fund. The majority (59%) reported that they did not receive any emergency funding. This is in line with Sported's findings, which stated that the second biggest challenge reported by its members after maintaining the wellbeing of participants, was maintaining the immediate financial commitments (peaking as a concern for 55% of organisations in week 3-4 of the crisis). The need for emergency grants and support for funding was cited as the biggest support need by Sported and Street Games.

Figure 2 demonstrates the 16 key risks organisations highlighted once Covid-19 restrictions were put in place (in March/April and June/July). In both March/April and June/July, 94% of organisations reported that they were unable to deliver their sessions/activities, with many specifically noting the lockdown being the main factor. London Youth reported that, *"the 20 community youth organisations on the programme are unable to re-start/complete delivery of the various activity elements of the programme before official project end date (based on official government guidance/projected timeframes of Covid-19)"*. Due to face-to-face sessions not taking place, 13% of organisations in March/April reported that they were worried about the regression of positive impact on participants, as the amount of support they are able to offer to them is reduced, however, this did reduce to 6% in June/July. The Bromley by Bow Centre highlighted that, *"users who've become more socially and physically active and confident on this programme lose the positive benefits and experiences that they've gained"* and Skyway Charity reported that they were worried that participants would start to be

involved in criminal activities and not follow social isolation advice.

In addition to weekly activities, 23% of organisations in March/April reported that they were unable to deliver training for staff and volunteers. Most responses highlighted that their training for volunteers and external practitioners had been cancelled. Catalyst Housing reported that *“planned training sessions for Catalyst colleagues, GP surgery and community providers in April 2020 has been cancelled.”* Additionally, the risk forms emphasised that non-sport related training for young people was also impacted. One example was given by Snow Camp, which stated that all the apprenticeship work placements were postponed due to the disruption to the snow sports industry. Consequently, *“young people’s qualifications and accreditation (will be) delayed.”* The percentage of organisations that reported they were unable to deliver training did reduce to 13% by June/July, however it was

evident that this has been a key issue for groups.

Almost one quarter (23%) of organisations in March/April stated that there were issues with trying to conduct impact measurement for their project. One example of this came from Fulham FC Foundation, who were, *“unable to track the impact of how many people we’re continuing to engage with through online content.”* Special Olympics Great Britain also highlighted that there would be an impact *“on overall KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] long term, dependent on length of health crisis”*. This created further anxiety as organisations felt they could not prove their impact on beneficiaries and would be held accountable. Although the figure reduced to 19% in the forms received in June/July, this issue also had an impact on the data inFocus received in its evaluation of Phase One of the Sport Unites investment programme.

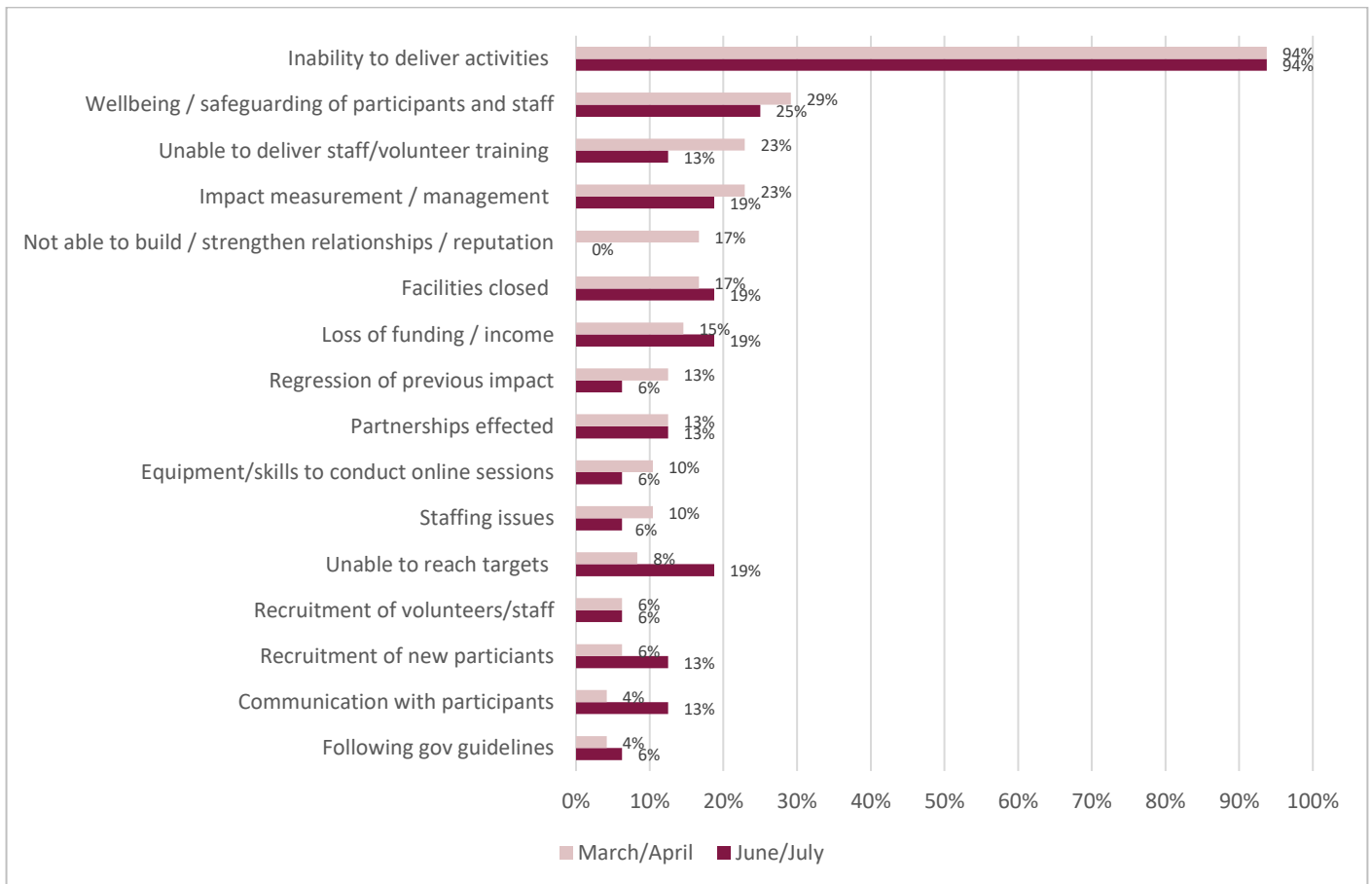


Figure 2: Risks / issues identified by grantees



### 1.2.1 Sport England

Sport England conducted research into how Covid-19 affected people's lives and impacted communities. It used qualitative methods to collect statements and stories from a range of organisations at varying levels working in the community sport sector across England, including London, to see what the key issues, challenges and inequalities were. Several themes emerged.

**Widening inequalities and impact on wellbeing:** This was the most common issue raised and of greatest concern. The *“disparity between the reality on the ground and the debate/rhetoric at national level was stark”* (Sport England 2020, p5), including the contradictions and limited consideration of the practicalities for people. For example, people were advised to avoid public transport, but no consideration was given to how travel was possible for those without cars.

**Common purpose:** The crisis has bought about shared challenges and needs, creating a role for the sport sector to come together at a local level to support each other and the wider community.

**Making connectivity and trust count:** Sport programs and organisations embedded in and trusted by the community are well placed for connectivity, working flexibly, responding quickly and collaborating effectively.

**Daily life:** How people spend their time has changed and may not be the same again. There has been an increase in domestic violence and people developing mental health issues. One positive noted was working from home meant less time commuting and parents spending more time with their family.

**Clarity of message:** People are appreciating and understanding the importance of regular physical activity to their physical and mental health but there are concerns that guidance and messaging are not always consistent and detracts from this progress.

**Digital divide:** Social divides have been amplified and this has increased the need to

ensure that multiple methods of inclusion are taken by organisations, so those within digital poverty are not left behind.

**Financial sustainability:** There are large gaps in funding to local authority providers because of additional costs and lower expected incomes due to the pandemic and associated restrictions. There is a call from funders, both public and private, to look at operating models and determine how they can work collaboratively.



The final theme focuses on what recovery means to the community sport sector. There is a need for common purpose and the sector feels it is, *“time to make a major shift in how we think and how we live our lives”* (Sport England 2020, p23). It discusses how the crisis has given the sector an opportunity to do things differently, rather than simply repair and return to the status quo. The report calls on a reflective process focused on behaviours that support collaboration and change, build resilience and develop and support the leadership required at all levels. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

### 1.2.2 Youth Sport Trust

The Youth Sport Trust summarised the key evidence it found from a range of sources on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on children and young people.

**Young people's mental health & concerns:** Imposed Covid-19 restrictions have had wide-ranging implications for young people's mental health and wellbeing. One third of children and young people have experienced an increase in mental health issues, including stress, loneliness and worry. Two thirds report feeling



lonely and there is great concern from those in the senior years of school about their futures.

**Physical activity during lockdown:**

Lockdown has been disruptive to the amount and type of activity undertaken by young people. Whilst 93% of children and young people continue to be active during lockdown, the numbers meeting the minimum daily requirement of an average of 60 minutes or more a day has dropped from 47% to 19%. This has also revealed stark inequalities, whereby 12% of BAME children and young people are inactive and 13% of those from the least affluent backgrounds are doing no activity.

**Schools and home learning:** Home learning has become a reality for most UK school children. School closures have meant no or limited physical education classes and no after school activities. There has been a wide gap in those being able to access online learning and those that have not, due to inequalities surrounding technology and internet access. Children and young people have been missing out on learning, socialising and being active because schools are closed. The report concludes that it is vital that children return to school as soon as it is safe to do.



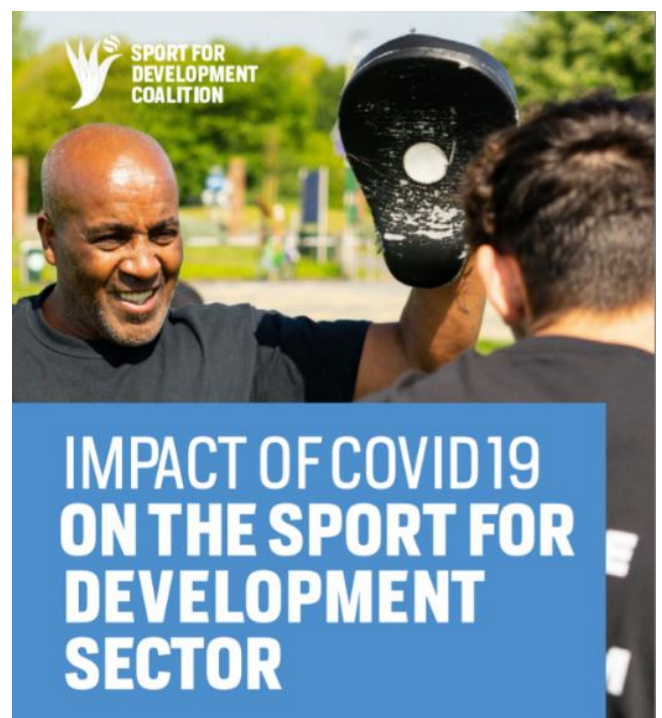
**Evidence Paper:**  
**The Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions on Children and Young People**  
 July 2020

The report has also listed positives that have come from the Covid-19 pandemic: Children and young people are now more conscious of the benefits of physical activity to their mental

wellbeing; there is greater youth activism, especially with regards to the environment and causes such as Black Lives Matter, and; community sport sector and school leaders are reviewing existing work models, as everyone is forced to review how they deliver and develop methods that are safe, sustainable and equitable. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

**1.2.3 The Sport for Development Coalition (SFDC)**

The SFDC is a growing movement of charities, governing bodies, funders and delivery organisations using sport and physical activity as tools for intervention when generating positive social outcomes across the UK. In September 2020, the SFDC published a report entitled, 'Impact of Covid-19 on the Sport for Development sector' and outlined the effects of the pandemic: against the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) outcomes\*; on differing demographic groups, and; on organisations.



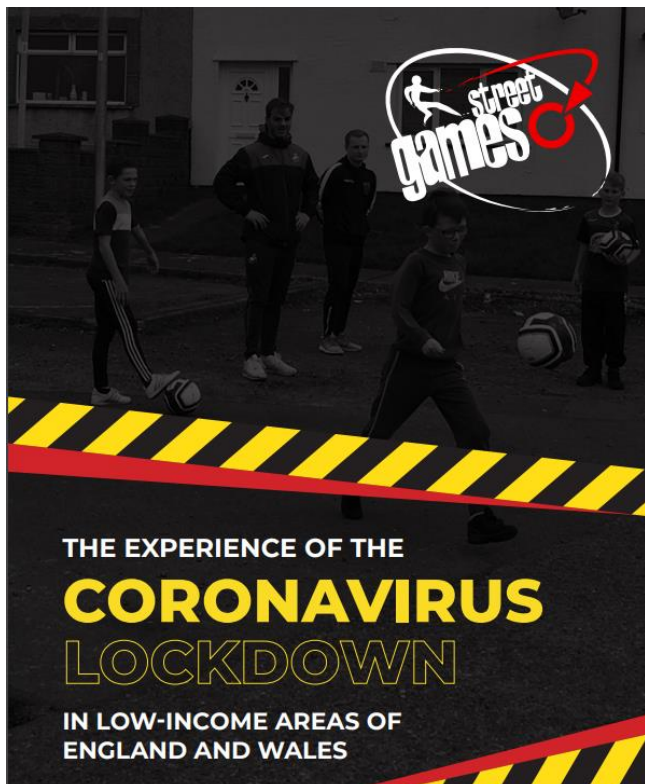
The report concluded the biggest detriment was to people's mental wellbeing, their social and community connections, and that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on some of the 'most vulnerable members of our society' with disproportional effects on certain demographics, with fatal

consequences. Whilst organisations had moved to respond to the crisis in innovative ways, many have had significant disruption in terms of delivery, finances and staffing. SFDC has passed on all its findings to evidence sessions held by a DCMS committee to ensure a voice from stakeholders was included in decisions to support the sector. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

\*DCMS outcomes: mental wellbeing; social and community development; individual development; physical wellbeing, and; economic development.

### 1.2.4 Street Games

Street Games is a sport for development charity that focuses on 'doorstep' sport to address the issues faced by the poorest in society. As well as its own projects, it acts as a supporting network to over 900 community organisations across the UK. Street Games conducted research on the experience of the coronavirus lockdown in low-income areas of England and Wales. It surveyed, interviewed and held round table focus groups with 248 young people involved in member organisations, Street Games projects and living in low-income areas, including areas of London.



The report highlighted that physical activity levels in lockdown had decreased for 68% of young people. Access to their normal activity opportunities were severely restricted at best and, for many, this lack of access meant they were not getting the additional benefits that come with being involved in organised sport for development activities. It highlighted how many low-income families do not have basic resources, such as footballs, and do not have access to the internet. It cited negative impacts on mental health, wellbeing, family breakdown, financial pressures on families and a lack of structure for young people leading to poor behaviour in some and a lack of 'mojo' or purpose in others. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

### 1.2.5 Sported

Sported is a charity focused on the sport for development sector which supports over 3,000 community and youth groups as member organisations across the UK. In March 2020, Sported launched phase one of a nationwide survey of its members entitled Community Pulse, focusing on the emergency response to the pandemic. Later, in phase two, the questions were revised to include those looking at recovery.

A total of 780 organisations responded to the survey across phase one and two. In addition, Sported held two focus groups to garner qualitative data to help understand the impact of Covid-19 amongst its members. Knowledge of funding opportunities and receiving emergency funding were named as the top two means of support required for the organisations. There was also a need for support in delivering online activities, either to deliver their own sessions or be able to signpost users to others taking place. With regards to how organisations are adapting, Sported found that some groups reported having staff and volunteers focussed on supporting Covid-19 relief, as well as on adapting their sessions to be delivered in alternative ways, including moving them online and creating off-line resources.





The Community Pulse report concluded that support from other organisations and networks is vital to support serving communities in the best way and that there are concerns that organisations who do not have strong bid-writing skills are missing out on grant funding. It also highlighted that there were serious challenges in understanding how social distancing requirements can be practically implemented. You can read the latest results from across the UK (5<sup>th</sup> June 2020) [HERE](#).

### 1.2.6 UK Active Sector Letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson



More people  
More active  
More often

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2020, the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, received a letter penned by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson (Chair of UK Active) and Andrew Moss (Chairman of the Sport and recreation Alliance) and counter signed by 101 leaders from across the sport and physical activity sector. The letter outlined that the sport and physical activity sector should be, “central to the nation’s recovery” and that the sector will be, “*at the forefront of government plans to improve the health and wellbeing of all communities*”. The full letter can be read [HERE](#).

## 1.3 Summary

From all reports, it is evident that organisations are anxious not only about their service at the present time, but also in the future. Sported found that 1 in 4 organisations were not sure that they would still exist in six months’ time (Sported 2020, p11), while the Mayor of London research found that 49% of organisations thought their organisation / business would not last 12 months. 45% of organisations from the survey were still focused on maintaining immediate financial commitments six weeks into lockdown (Sported 2020, p12). This was also highlighted by Sport Unites grantees in the risk forms, where in June/July almost one fifth (19%) were concerned about the loss of funding / income. Common findings include:

- Londoners have been less active and have had less opportunities to be active, as gyms and pools have closed and access to sport and leisure facilities and public parks has been curtailed. During lockdown, Londoners have been cooped up in small flats without access to an outdoor space.
- Public areas are busy and have limited facilities open, including toilets, during lockdown. Many reported that this was causing sanitary issues in some public places, particularly in parks where people were utilising the space for exercise.
- Many organisations are concerned that participants, particularly the vulnerable, will be nervous of the risks of returning to sport and physical activity and the sector is working hard to mitigate these risks and ensure safety and allay fears.
- Some organisations have reported that young people were being approached by gangs as they exercised and played with those in their ‘bubbles’, and domestic violence has become more apparent in homes across the capital.
- Maintaining positive wellbeing is now a real concern, as many have been isolated indoors away from families and friends, prohibited from conducting their normal schedules and relationships. Community sport leaders reported more than twice the

anxiety levels of the previous year at the start of the pandemic at the end of March (Community Pulse, 2020, p2) and that 59% were initially concerned about participants maintaining their wellbeing. Managing mental health for those with certain conditions was already difficult and the curtailment of services and support have meant many struggling to maintain the practices and routines that worked for them.

- Parents and guardians have found themselves being the English, Maths and PE teacher, as education moved to being done remotely. With many families without or having to share a computer, tablet or smart phone between parents and children for work / study, the crisis highlighted the

limitations in access to modern communication structures. This, in turn, limited who could access online support and services offered by the community sport sector.

- Many organisations are concerned that they are unable to meet their targets and expected outcomes, either as a direct result of lockdown and lower participation or because they have been prohibited in measuring their impact. Some are worried that this will affect future funding. Many are seeking new and innovative ways of collecting data remotely and are seeking, or investing in, training and new technology to do this.



Photo Credit: Caroline Teo, GLA



## Section 2: 'Coping' – The Response to Covid-19

This section first outlines what the Mayor of London's Community Sport team has done to respond in terms of emergency funding, leadership and support to help the sector adapt and begin to transform itself to the new conditions faced, and to avert the further reinforcement of social and health inequalities. It then reports on the reaction of the sector to the pandemic in terms of its initial, emergency response, ending with example case studies of how traditional sport organisations have adapted to support the community and how community centred organisations are utilising networks developed through sport and physical activity. The project case studies demonstrate how both formal and informal networks have aided collaboration between different organisations and allowed the community sport sector to respond quickly to support their participants and other in their localities, including the most vulnerable in society. These case studies are taken from organisations that have received GLA funding for one or more of their projects or programmes prior to Covid-19 and submitted reports during the crisis. Not all examples are of the intended project work that was GLA-funded but all were made possible because of the flexible response by the Mayor of London's Community Sport team or their involvement in wider GLA-funded programmes. Data was gathered from a combination of interviews with key informants, project reports, statements from Learning Community events / activities, and submitted risk forms.

### 2.1 The Response of the Mayor of London's Community Sport Team

The Community Sport team sits within the Team London and Community Sport Unit and is part of the wider Community and Skills Directorate within the GLA. It is responsible for delivering the community sport elements of the Mayor's sport and physical activity strategy 'Sport for All of Us'. This includes the delivery of the community sport investment programme 'Sport Unites' and community elements of MEEF. The Mayor was a signatory of the London Funders joint statement pledging to offer support to civil society groups affected by

Covid-19. This included contributing £7.6 million to-date to the London Community Response Fund (LCRF).

Prior to the pandemic, the team reviewed its activities to prepare for a lockdown. For the first two weeks, the team met twice daily online to prioritise work and action tasks, allowing half the team to focus on the immediate needs of grantees / daily crisis response and the other half to liaise with key organisations across the city to coordinate approaches. The team joined the Mayor of London's wider mission for recovery plans that focused on civil society, with a specific focus on young and vulnerable people. The team were able to target long-term planning - how to better manage grants, allocate funding effectively and ensure the long-term stability of the sector. Existing focus groups set up to discuss the planning of Phase 2 of Sport Unites had an implicit consideration of recovery on all new plans moving forward.

For the Mayor's Community Sport team, the main priorities were to determine how the grantees were coping, what they were doing and how they could be supported through existing grants. Therefore, the risk form was developed. There has been a concerted effort to work closely with other teams across the GLA and this has meant other departments have utilised similar approaches to working and supporting their grantees. Every grantee received a call explaining the Mayor of London's stance and offered the opportunity to complete a risk form, which enabled them to propose changes to their programmes and how their funding would be used. The position taken was that the Mayor would be flexible on funding, for example, to extend funding agreements to allow funding to be redirected for workforce support not previously covered and / or for activities to change to provide Covid-19 support for participants and communities. The forms and telephone conversations meant that the team were armed with the information they needed to answer questions, make decisions, and ensure a dialogue was in place between grantee and funder. All risk forms were agreed, and

grantees were able to adapt quickly to respond because of this approach.

The team also reviewed its existing grant streams to ensure their strategic function could accommodate Covid-19-related issues. All new funding streams, grant application forms, and processes were adapted to incorporate Covid-19 related issues. These included altered funding amounts, longer delivery times and specific questions on the precautions in place and managing the risks of Covid-19, which had more prominence in the scoring process. Online question and answer sessions are to be run to explain the grant streams to help ensure that organisations are prepared for the adjusted application process.

### 2.1.1 Sport for Social Integration

**Stronger Communities:** As part of the Mayor's Sport Unites programme, the Community Sport team launched the final round of funding of the Stronger Communities Fund in August 2020 for projects taking place between October 2020-February 2021. The focus of the fund centred on using sport and physical activity to tackle the increased rates of loneliness and social isolation that have spiked during Covid-19 because of the continued lockdown and social distancing measures. The total amount of funding an organisation could receive increased to £10,000 and over a four-month period. The team expect to fund around 20 projects but, at the time of writing, 254 applications had been received – a 69% increase on the 150 in the last round of applications. Further details can be found [HERE](#).



**Model City London (MCL):** In association with the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, the Capacity Building grants have been adapted to

have a Covid-19 response focus. In addition, a Covid-19 Response Fund has been set up for organisations using sport to support communities working in the three coalition areas to access a share of £90,000. Grants up to a maximum of £1,500 for single organisations and £5,000 for joint/collaborative bids were being awarded in two rounds up until the end of November 2020.

**London Together:** New application forms have been simplified and reflect the issues surrounding Covid-19, and interviews have been moved online.



### 2.1.2 Active Londoners

**Grants:** As previously, the Active Londoners fund is to focus on tackling inactivity levels and supporting people with their mental health and wellbeing. However, the Mayor's Sport team now have a greater emphasis on funding projects which focus more on supporting those with mental health issues due to the increased need. They are working closely with **Thrive LDN** (a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners) and the Mayor of London's Health team to assess the mental health aspects of applications. Further details can be found [HERE](#).

### 2.1.3 Young London Fund

**Summer Activities:** The fund is distributed in partnership with the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Team and the process is managed by the **London Community Response Fund** (LCRF). The LCRF is a group of 60 funders working together to provide coordinated funding to support groups responding to the needs of communities affected by Covid-19 in London. It is a new

model for funding collaboration, is leveraging more funding for the sector and aims to make it easier for organisations to apply. Applicants use one form, seen by multiple funders, which ultimately increases the chances of being funded. The delivery period for summer activities has been extended to include the autumn and winter of 2020. Further details can be found [HERE](#).

### 2.1.4 Thought Leadership

**Talking Covid-19 Webinar Series:** In response to the Covid-19 crisis, London Sport and the Mayor of London's Community Sport Team created a series of eight interactive webinars from April to August 2020. The series aimed to support London's community physical activity and sport sector with up-to-date practical information, informed advice, guidance and inspiration during the Covid-19 lockdown. The webinars covered the following themes:



- Finance and funding – practical advice and summaries of what funding is immediately available to those working in grassroots sport.

*“Thank you London Sport and Mayor of London – a very clear and constructive webinar to support small businesses. Hoping all those delivering community sport manage to get through these testing times!”*

Centric Sports Management

- Being active at home – how grassroots sport organisations can support people to be active at home during lockdown.

*“Thanks to all involved, really useful. I think this topic will be an area that keeps evolving as time goes on so helpful for the links & organisations that are supporting”*

Ashley Hosier – Youth Sport Trust

- Leadership in times of crisis – a focus on leadership in times of change and crisis and how the community sport sector can adapt and respond.
- Mental health - explores the challenges around mental health during the Covid-19 lockdown, and what it means for physical activity and sport.
- Children and young people - focus on children and young people during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- Diversity, race, and representation - focus on diversity, race, and representation in grassroots sport.
- Disability, inclusion and resuming physical activity - focus on the experiences of disabled people during the Covid-19 lockdown and the importance for the physical activity sector in addressing accessibility and inclusion in its plans for the resumption of physical activity.



*“A really useful webinar, thank you. Lots of focus on solutions and resources and vital to keep learning together as we adapt to our current circumstances”.*

Dr Chris Whitaker, Sport England

- Social distance sport pilot - focus on the how sport can adapt to social distancing and the early findings from a new, socially distanced sport pilot launched by the Mayor of London in the London Borough of Hackney.

A total of 677 individuals from a range of organisations, including grassroot clubs and national governing bodies, attended the sessions, with an average of 130 registering for each of the webinars. 27% attended two or more sessions. The webinar series can be viewed on the London Sport events website page [HERE](#).

## 2.2 Grantee Emergency Response

Despite the structural difficulties, many organisations have been quick to adapt their activities and remain in contact with participants to engage and support them through the crisis. Community sport organisations across London responded in very different ways. Some furloughed staff, some moved activities online and some changed their role to support the community by setting up food banks or services for essential workers and / or the vulnerable in their localities. These localised networks are either existing community networks that have now utilised sport and physical activity to support communities or are newly developed because sporting organisations have taken a lead within the community. This section gives an outline of how the sector has coped in the early stages of the Covid-19 ‘shock’. Below we outline the analysis of the risk forms submitted to the community sport team by grantees and then highlight some project case studies as examples of the types of work undertaken. This includes providing / delivering food and medicine and telephone and welfare support for participants and the wider community.

On the risk forms, organisations were asked how they will try to overcome the risks / issues they reported. These are displayed in Figure 3. Although 94% of organisations reported that they were unable to deliver activities, 77% in March/April and 88% in June/July stated that they had or were planning to move their activities online (this is similar to the finding by Sported in their Community Pulse report). One example of this came from London Sports Trust, who stated, *“We have cancelled weekly sessions but now we are providing online exercises for parents and carers to do [in] their home. We are also putting together a pack of games for families to play with their SEND [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities] children”.* It is evident, however, that there have been many factors which have influenced an organisations’ ability to conduct online sessions, the main one being access to technology. 13% of organisations reported in June/July that they have provided technological support for their participants and 13% stated that they have / will be seeking to provide equipment. The Islington Bangladesh Association stated they will be providing their participants with tablets if they do not have access to a smart phone or other means of getting online.

The experience of organisations moving their services online has been contrasting. The Community Sport team survey found that 27% of organisations reported having slightly more or significantly more demand than usual. One explanation of this could be due to staff and volunteers planning how to move their services online, in addition to maintaining the engagement of their participants. On the other hand, 60% of organisations stated that they faced significantly or slightly less demand for their services than usual due to Covid-19. This could be due to 25% of organisations (March/April) having to postpone events / activities. In addition to moving activities / sessions online, 25% of organisations in March/April noted that they were or were planning to start providing online training for staff, volunteers and, in some cases, conducting non-active training and workshops for participants. One example of this came from Fight for Peace International, which stated, *“We will be sending out educational resources to*

*young people, via our online platform, and via individual mentors.*" This increased to 50% in the June/July reporting, demonstrating how organisations had already adapted and progressed within a short period.

In a similar way to online activities, some organisations reported that there were factors which hindered them being able to conduct training online. The main barrier was the lack of resources, both of organisation staff and the participants themselves in terms of their capabilities and access to technology. Alongside running online activities and training, 56% of organisations reported in June/July that they were continuing to communicate with participants regularly. A variety of communication avenues were reported and included phone calls, online communication software, such as Zoom, and social media,

including WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

Another response for 27% of organisations in March/April was to work with partners and collaborate with other organisations, which increased to 50% by submission of the June/July risk form. The most common reason for collaborating was to be able to continue to deliver activities to participants and to try to recruit new participants. For example, Catalyst Housing highlighted, *"We will look to work with community partners to provide more sustained support for those individuals/families such as our befriending service"*. This increase in collaboration is noted by some within the project case studies that follow as a key factor in maintaining support for, and recruiting, new participants, and that the relationships that have formed will likely be formalised and maintained post-Covid-19.

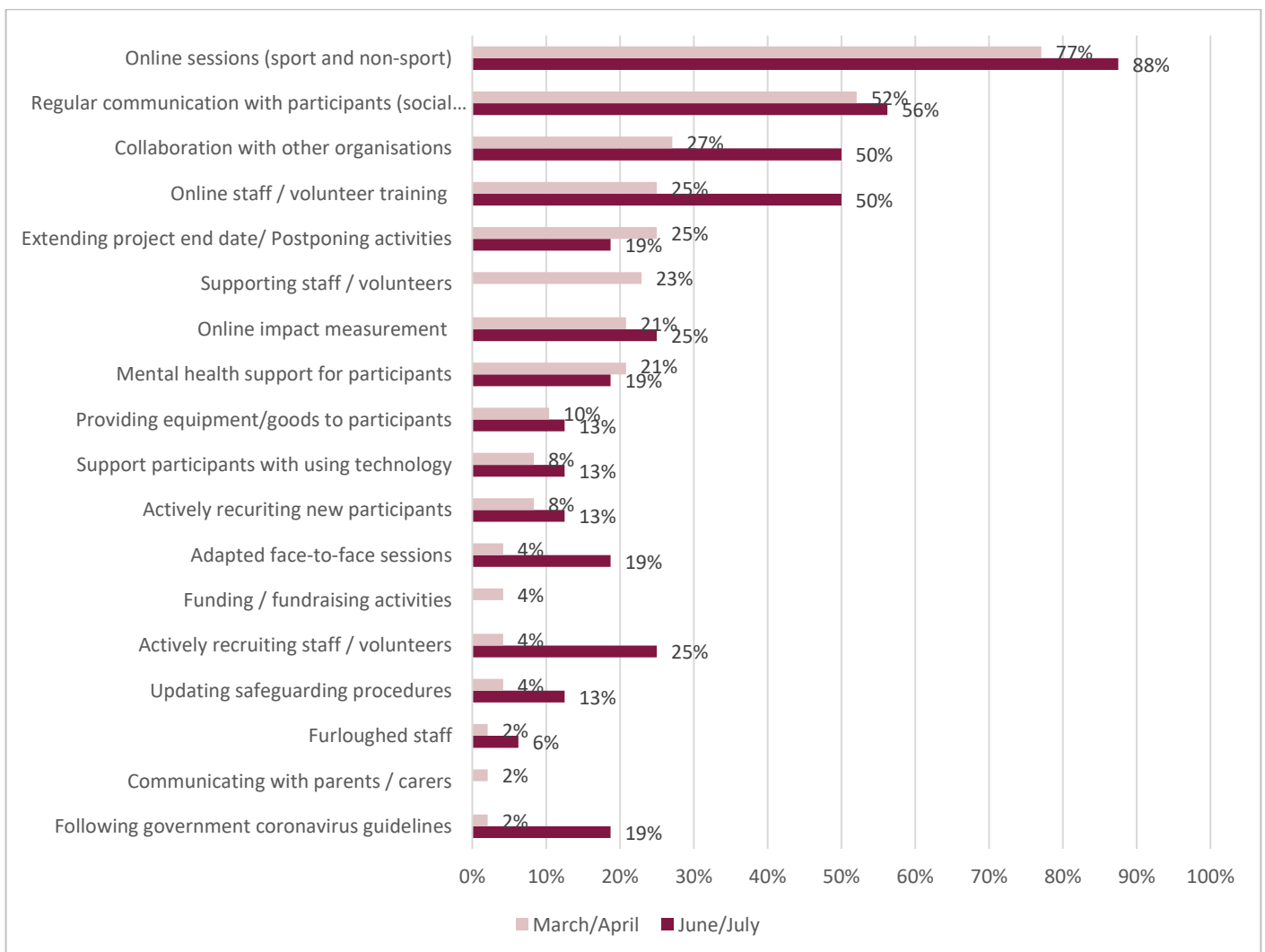


Figure 3: Grantee responses to Covid-19 related risks / issues

## 2.3 Initial Response

The Covid-19 lockdown meant almost all organisations had to cease delivering face-to-face activities. During the initial phase of lockdown, many organisations responded to the immediate needs of their participants and the wider community by changing the nature of their work (albeit temporarily) and utilising staff to support those most at risk of the negative impact of the virus and social distancing restrictions on their lives. The following project case studies outline some examples of what the sector has done in terms of responding to the emergency.

### PROJECT RISK ANALYSIS SPORT UNITES GRANTS

19/03/2020

#### OVERVIEW

Organisation:	Your organisation name?	Grant Value:	How much funding were you awarded?
Project Start:	When did your funding period begin?	Project End:	When does your funding period end?
Key Contact:	Please enter your name as the key project contact	Sport Unites Fund:	Which Sport Unites fund did you receive a grant from?

#### 1. Risk Assessment

**i** Please bullet point the main project risks or issues you face/are facing from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Please also describe the impact this will have, or is having, on your project – and, for perceived risks, the probability. Note that as well as the effect on direct delivery/activity, you may wish to consider for example your ability to collect project data, and broader organisational risks such as the potential for financial losses due to uncertainty, unexpected failure or decrease in day-to-day operations, etc.,

Risk (you think will or may happen); or Issue (has happened or is happening now)	Description	Probability (Risks) (Score 1-5, where 1 is low and 5 is high)	Impact on Activity/Delivery (Score 1-5, where 1 is low and 5 is high)	Impact on Project Outcomes (Score 1-5, where 1 is low and 5 is high)
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Photo Credit: Shirin Al Rashid, Our Content



*“Over the years we’ve proved that positive micro interactions contribute to our local communities being more healthy, confident and resilient.”*

David Pitcher – CEO, Wheely Tots



**Wheely Tots** is a charity based in the borough of Haringey that focuses on improving community development and social integration through the medium of cycling. It provides bikes for toddlers, children, and adults, and runs online and offline sessions. Wheely Tots was funded by the GLA in 2018 via the **London Family Fund**, with the belief that all children, families and communities should be healthy confident and resilient, and this is best achieved by supporting families from different backgrounds. The CEO is also a member of the steering group of the Mayor of London / Laureus Sport for Good funded **Model City London Coalition in Haringey**. Wheely Tots run several programmes, including the ‘Your Bike Project’ in Broadwater Farm and Northumberland Park estates. ‘Your Bike Project’ trains young people in ride leadership, bike mechanics, marketing and social media, and provides opportunities for employment. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, skills and resources were diverted to help key / NHS workers and those most in need. Online consultations were run with expert mechanics and cycle instructors to offer support with bike issues and a mobile maintenance / repair service was developed. The bike loan service from the ‘kit library’ was extended to provide bikes for NHS / key workers and for families to get out of their homes and be active and / or learn how to ride during lockdown. All services are offered free to key / NHS workers. A partnership was formed with the Felix Project to create a weekly foodbank for the residents of Broadwater Farm, with food distributed by local residents, for local residents.

*“We provide food every week. We have partnered with restaurants and a health shop. They are preparing meals for us to add into a food basket with essential items for families.”*

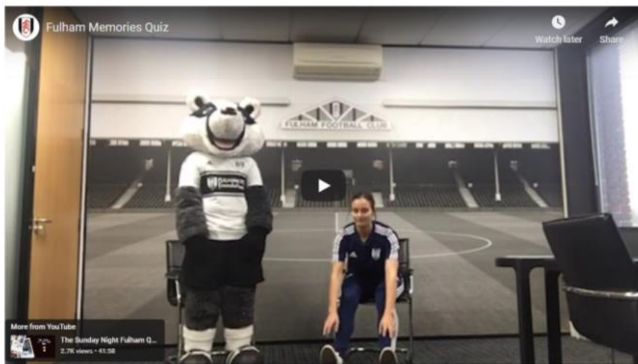
Natasha Simpson – Community Lead, BADU



**BADU Community CIC (BADU)** uses sport to educate, empower and uplift young people and their families in the local community. It focuses on delivering physical education lessons, after school sport and support for the transition young people go through during critical stages of their lives in the borough of Hackney. BADU has run annual GLA-funded YLF Summer Activities for young people during school holidays and is involved in several programmes run by other organisations, such as London Youth’s **Active Talent** programme, which is focused on developing youth leadership. The organisation established a food bank, soup kitchen and a mental health and community support helpline. The **‘One Community’** initiative was set up to ensure that what is delivered by the organisation provides activities and services needed by the community and that they include community members in their design and delivery. Adaptions focused on assisting those disproportionately affected by Covid-19. A ‘no questions asked’ philosophy was put in place to build trust with those seeking support. This meant support could be targeted, personalised and accessed by those with an unsettled immigration status, no recourse to public funds or with difficulties speaking English. This included many of the families of its regular participants. Participants were also encouraged to be involved with both the referral process and in buying and sorting out food parcels. A combination of trust and an extensive network within their community led to over 150 families a week being supported with food and supplies during lockdown.

*“We will be continuing to offer befriending calls and expand this programme to support individuals at the highest risk of loneliness in our local communities. We have used our experiences to create and develop staff training and guidance in this area and we will continue to reflect on best practice with the support of our partners.”*

**Laura Everton – Health Development Officer, Fulham FC Foundation**



**Fulham FC Foundation** is the charitable arm of Fulham Football Club. The Foundation uses sport to tackle community challenges. Through the Active Londoners Fund, the GLA-funded **‘Active Minds’** project provides sporting reminiscence and physical activity sessions to support older people aged 50+ who are at risk of / have, dementia, mental health issues and who are socially isolated / lonely. It uses imagery, memorabilia, quizzes and games, alongside physical activity to allow participants to share memories and knowledge, connecting with their past and others. Covid-19 meant that all sessions were suspended, as participants had to self-isolate as per government guidance. Lockdown restrictions meant that the project partners were unable to remain functioning and furloughed many staff. For those with internet access, the team were able to email materials and work alongside Age UK Hammersmith and Fulham to run online socialisation sessions. Staff were repositioned to contact all participants via telephone and check-in with them regularly. The team expanded this to telephone befriending by reaching out to Fulham FC season ticket holders over the age of 70 and to those referred through a new partnership with the South Fulham Primary Care Network. In total 1,400 individuals were contacted and offered support and 200 received regular contact and support.

*“We weren’t actively promoting free food or the soup kitchen, but the demand was very significant very, very quickly.”*

**Emma Pajarillga – Walking and Cycling Coordinator, The Hornbeam Centre**



Credit: Anne Redelinghuys

**The Hornbeam Centre** in Waltham Forest engages with residents to enable and empower them to live more sustainable lifestyles, with a specific focus on: ethical, healthy, affordable and sustainable food; waste reduction, and; conserving resources. They encourage residents to cycle and walk more for both health and sustainable transportation reasons. The centre ran a series of GLA-funded cycling activities via the Stronger Communities and Active Londoners initiative, including collaborating with **Cycle Sisters**, which predominantly targeted Muslim women to increase their activity levels and get them mixing socially with others. The cycling programme utilised council-owned bikes that are now being used by key workers. In response to the outbreak of Covid-19, the centre paused its regular activities and adapted by acting as a food distribution hub for Waltham Forest, providing takeaway meals via the community café and distributing groceries to food stalls and individuals. There was already a network of volunteers in place, collecting and distributing surplus food from local businesses, and a call was placed for more volunteers to join to help deliver hot meals and essential items to those isolating at home. The project was entitled ‘The Hornbeam’s Good Deeds on Bikes’ and continued post lockdown. A total of 110 volunteers were recruited, with a significant number of them already participants on some of the cycling projects with access to their own bicycles.



*“Our programme coordinator has and will continue to contact service users on a daily and regular basis to keep them informed of and support them to join our opportunities and also provide information on other services that are available aimed at supporting their mental wellbeing whilst living with current Covid19 restrictions.”*

**Colin King – Sport and Physical Activity team, Bromley By Bow Centre**



The **Bromley by Bow Centre** is a charity that combines an extensive neighbourhood hub with a medical practice and a community research project in Tower Hamlets. Through the Active Londoners fund, the centre ran a GLA-funded programme called **‘Active Health 4 All’**.

The aim of their project was to support residents aged 18 years and above living with a mental health condition using community-based sport and accredited sports training. The ambition is to create a lasting change in people's lifestyles, mental and physical health, that will see them encouraged and supported to become more physically and socially active within their communities on a long-term basis.

Throughout Covid-19 restrictions, the centre has had to minimise its face-to-face delivery, in line with government guidance, whilst continuing to provide services and support to Tower Hamlets residents of all ages. The centre posted resources and advice on ‘looking after your health and wellbeing’, including offline resources for those who did not have access to internet access for online sessions / guidance. Centre staff contacted service users daily to inform them of the services on offer, including adapted ‘Active Health 4 All’ sessions.

*“We made 355 calls to Southall residents which resulted in 181 people engaging in the project during the crisis.”*

**Nicola Wheeler – Head of Community Investment, Catalyst Housing**



**Catalyst** is a housing association with 34,000 homes in London and the home counties. As part of their commitment to community and social purpose, the association is delivering a 12-month Active Londoners funded social prescribing project to increase levels of physical activity for those who are physically inactive, socially isolated and / or suffering from poor mental health. Developed from a pilot for those living on the Havelock Estate, it is now offering support for a wider audience of residents in Southall, Ealing. Entitled **‘Physical Activity Southall’**, the project works closely with GP surgeries and community groups to map out opportunities in the neighbourhood. In response to Covid-19, Catalyst moved its resources into delivering the social prescribing project online, making regular welfare calls to Southall residents and providing online training for colleagues, GP surgery and community providers on social prescribing. The telephone outreach service included a referral pathway to a Community Link Worker to provide more sustained support for those individuals / families in need, including a befriending service.



## 'Adapting' – Returning to Delivery

This section outlines the learning and sharing activities held to support the community sport sector to plan and prepare for returning to delivery, including the London Together Guidance for the community sport sector and Insight Fortnight. Insight Fortnight is a series of meetings hosted by inFocus between the community sport sector and the Mayor of London's Community Sport team, intended to ensure multiple voices can share their good practices and insights into how to deliver social outcomes through sport and physical activity in the context of Covid-19, and what this may mean for the transformation of the sector. The key findings and guidance / learning produced from the Mayor of London's socially distanced sport pilot project is being used to provide practical guidance for the sector on how to deliver, whilst maintaining social distance restrictions.

As with the previous section, it ends on how the community sport sector is returning to delivery, with example project case studies of how Sport Unites and MEEF grantees are adapting to continue to deliver core activities with social restrictions and return to play measures in place. The project case studies provide some indication towards how organisations might build upon their successes further, and how to further transform the sector in the future to be more resilient, robust, and prepared in a crisis, whilst remaining sustainable and accessible. These case studies are taken from organisations that have received GLA funding for one or more of their projects or programmes prior to Covid-19 and submitted reports during the crisis. Not all examples are of the intended project work that was GLA-funded, but all were made possible because of the flexible response by the Mayor of London's Community Sport team or their involvement in wider GLA-funded programmes. Data was gathered from a combination of interviews with key informants, project reports, statements from Learning Community events / activities and submitted risk forms.

### 2.4 Learning and Sharing during the Pandemic

Amongst the issues of delivery were challenges surrounding the monitoring and evaluation of activities and services, and the sharing of learning with others. The crisis demonstrated the sector's over-reliance on traditional methods, such as paper-based surveys, which relied on the data collector being present at the same time as the participant, and on seminars and meetings for its dissemination. Some organisations focused their attention on impact measurement and management, knowing that evidencing their impact will be vital in securing future funding and sharing their insight into doing things well will help make the sector stronger and more resilient.

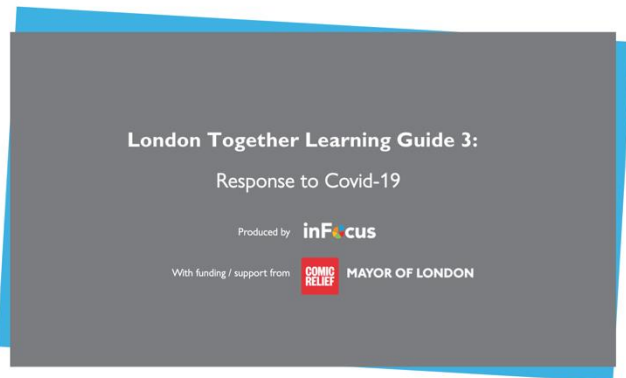
#### 2.4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

The crisis forced the sector to re-evaluate and to think differently about how data is collected, stored, accessed, and processed. It has led to many designing new and creative approaches, utilising social media and digital technology to collect, store and analyse data. Some organisations have invested in established systems such as Upshot, others in training, and some in utilising social media, messaging services, such as WhatsApp, or remote communication platforms, like Zoom, to garner feedback and run polls and focus groups.

#### 2.4.2 London Together Guidance

London Together is a £3 million Sport Unites partnership financed equally by the Mayor of London and Comic Relief, which invests in sport for change approaches that aim to improve social integration in London. As the learning partner to the partnership, inFocus put together a guide revealing the different approaches grantees were taking in returning to delivery. It outlined the initial response of grantees to the emergency, how they were returning to delivery and the methods they were taking to enable activities to occur. This included switching to online / remote delivery of adapted activities, running social activities, self-directed activities that can be done independently at home and continuing to support participants offline via

mentoring and one-to-one support, where applicable / necessary. The guide provides tips for organisations on how to move out of lock-down and take a 'hybrid' approach, combining both online and face-to-face activities to recognise the changing needs of individuals and consider government social distance restrictions and associated guidance. You can view the guide [HERE](#).



### 2.4.3 Creating a Learning Community

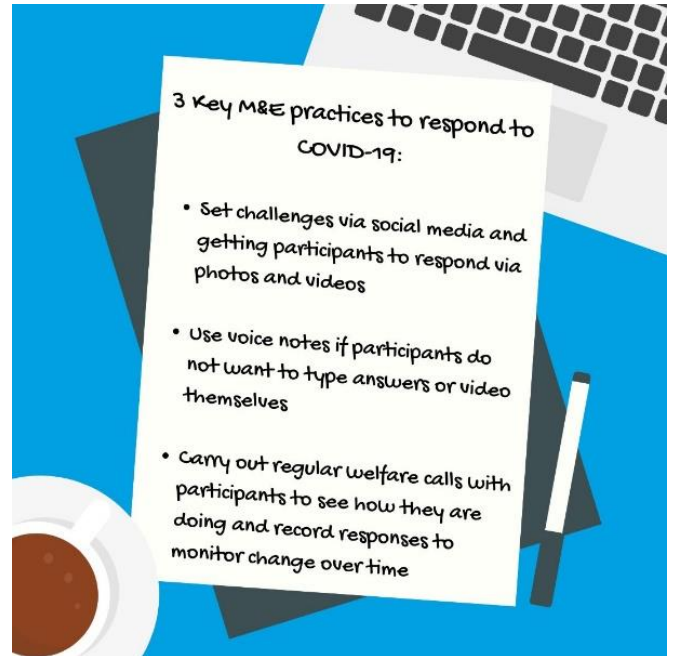
InFocus launched the online Learning Community hosted by LinkedIn, which focuses on garnering best practice from organisations to share and learn from failure, as well as success. During the 'Insight Fortnight', the Good Practice Survey was launched, a dedicated webinar on how to conduct impact measurement management during Covid-19 was held and a series of meetings with the wider community sport sector were conducted.

*"Insights have come thick and fast, with great tips on how to ensure lasting impact through the Mayor's Sport Unites investment fund. The GLA team are also listening hard to incorporate the collective wisdom of the group into the next phase of the programme. We are really excited about the next three webinars in the series still to come!"*

**Connect Sport Newsletter**

On 29 April 2020, inFocus held a webinar entitled 'Community Sport M&E Challenges and Strategies in the Time of Covid-19' with guest speakers Andrew Staples (London

Youth), Tom Burstow (Sported) and Daniel Stracey (London Sport). This led to an article calling on the community sector to discuss how to 'Build Back Better', which was posted on social media and within the LinkedIn Learning Community and can be viewed [HERE](#).

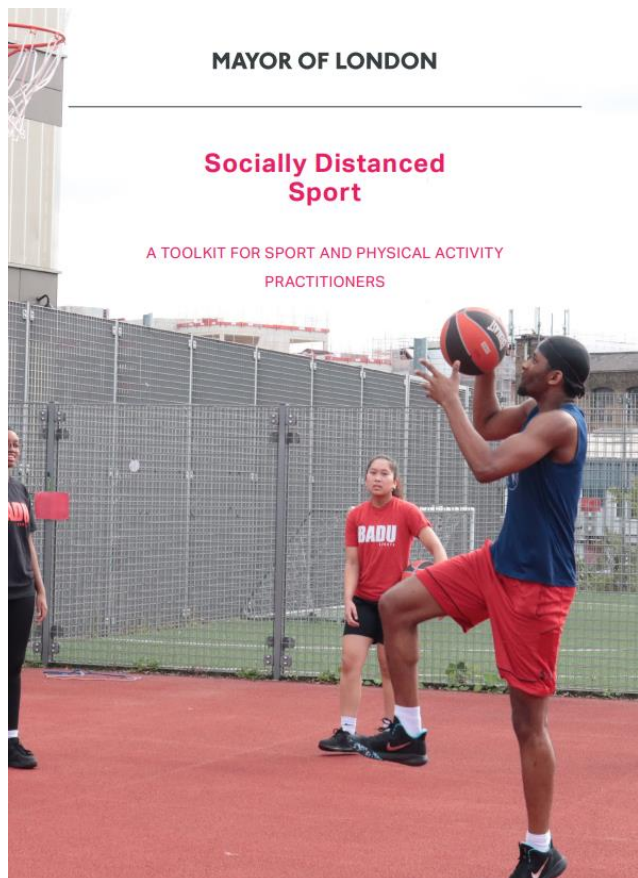


At the start of September 2020, the Insight Fortnight was held. The event was a series of five meetings hosted by inFocus and focused on good practice on delivering social outcomes through sport and physical activity. The timing of the event meant the issues of Covid-19 were implicit in all the discussions. A total of 92% of those surveyed stated they took away something from the meetings that was useful and could be used / applied within their own work. The Insight Fortnight meetings can be viewed [HERE](#).

### 2.4.4 Socially Distanced Sport

In June / July 2020, the Mayor of London's Community Sport team funded a pilot project to deliver socially distanced sport in Hackney. Funded through the Sport Unites community investment programme, the pilot was delivered by two locally experienced and trusted community organisations who had access to the target beneficiary group of young people – BADU Sports and Salaam Peace. The participants were: children aged 8-12 who took part in football, and; young people aged 15-18 who either took part in netball, basketball, or

football sessions. 67% of participants were male and 33% were female. The group were from a diverse range of ethnicities, with 78% coming from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities. A case study of the pilot project compiled by inFocus was published by the Mayor of London and can be viewed [HERE](#).



The key findings / learnings were:

- The average number of days participants engaged in physical activity increased by the end of the project for both age groups.
- All participants reported that they always or often felt safe during the sessions. From observations, everyone was following the rules and maintaining safe distances from others, avoiding contact and maintaining good hygiene. By the end of the pilot, no unsafe physical contact between participants was observed. More research is needed to see how formal sport can affect participants' conduct in informal settings.
- The average reported wellbeing of participants increased from pre-project to post-project. The reported life satisfaction level increased, with the older participants surpassing their scores prior to lockdown.

The pilot had a positive impact on the feelings of loneliness the younger participants were experiencing.

- A strong network of organisations with good relationships meant it was possible to establish the necessary means to work collaboratively and respond within a short space of time. To support community sport organisations, it is suggested that grassroots networks should be established and supported so that community sport organisations are in a better position to collaborate and respond to a crisis in the future.
- Schools offer a safe venue for community sport at any time, regardless of a lockdown. Existing partnerships with the local schools involved meant that facilities were available and accessible, but many school facilities are not utilised to their full capacity and could be used by community sport providers. Other venues owned by local authorities, the church and housing associations are often overlooked, and systems could be put in place to support the opening of facilities and for providers to partner with community sport sector organisations.

*“This project is leading the way for return to play in #London. You don’t often see government taking risks like this. Well done @BaduSports & @salaampeaceSP for navigating the ever-shifting guidance. @LondonSport will share what’s been learned to help others do the same.”*

**Lorna Leech – London Sport** (via twitter)

The Mayor of London published a toolkit for sport and physical activity practitioners, which is hosted on both the Mayor of London and the London Sport website and shared amongst several networks, including those signed up to the Connect Sport newsletter. Developed by inFocus and BADU Sport, the toolkit focuses on providing key information and guidance to deliver socially distanced sport sessions, where it is possible to do so. A dedicated webinar was held as part of the London Sport ‘Talking Covid’



series and has been shared with national governing bodies. The toolkit can be viewed [HERE](#).

At the time of writing, plans were in place for MEEF funded projects that incorporated face-to-face activities for the public with social restrictions and Covid-19 mitigations in place. Street Games are planning to run a programme of activities linked to the Skateboarding World Championships, including activation events and training of coaches. Baseball / Softball UK (BSUK) are planning to run a softball league across communities in London, despite the MLB London Series not happening.

## 2.5 Moving Forward, Towards Transformation

The research conducted by others, the Mayor's Community Sport team, alongside the project case studies collectively demonstrate an array of responses to the pandemics, but the use of networking and collaboration – both formal and informal, have been the most prominent and highly beneficial approach throughout the pandemic to galvanise support for communities. There are traditional sport organisations changing how they work to support those in need through non-sport activities, such as food and medicine provision / delivery or befriending services. The community sport sector has been able to adapt quickly and respond to the crisis by giving emergency support to those in need, including those from across the wider community / locality, as well as their own users. Non-sport community organisations have done the same but have utilised their own and others' sport and physical activity networks to create a strong volunteer workforce to help deliver essential services and ensure those at risk are adequately supported.

Through their grassroots, place-based connections and understanding of the issues within their communities, coupled with the trust and esteem they have built up with those they serve, community sport sector organisations provide valuable services. They are adaptable to the mechanism they deliver through and can help those that are not able to access other, mainstream systems of support. They

collaborate with other organisations and find new ways of delivering essential services and getting things done. Collectively, the grassroots of the sector have been able to adapt services to Covid-19 and build a volunteer base to:

- provide essential services to keyworkers e.g. bike repair / bike loan services;
- set-up foodbanks / soup kitchens;
- deliver food / medicine, and;
- offer wellbeing / mental health support and befriending services.

Whilst there has been a sense of 'solidarity in a crisis', many are seeing the benefits of working in different ways and looking to how they can apply some of what they have been doing to their work, regardless of Covid-19. In addition to online provision and adapted socially distant 'live' activities, the sector has moved towards collaboration and formalising partnerships to:

- target participants via referrals from others;
- extend new and essential services to others;
- pool human resources;
- share space / facilities, and;
- harmonise impact measurement systems.

The opportunity to share with others in a common situation and going through common problems and challenges has really highlighted the value of collaboration. There is an opportunity for those governing community sport and / or managing networks at a macro level to focus attention on supporting and growing this collaboration.

## 2.6 Returning to Delivery

During the Covid-19 lockdown, some found ways of delivering activities online or remotely and as restrictions were eased, many began returning to face-to-face delivery, with strict protocols and return to play measures in place. The following project case studies outline some examples of how the sector has adapted their core activities, the benefit they are seeing from this and how the crisis has informed their future planning.

*“For a lot of the membership the facts and figures were quite startling as they weren’t aware of the lack of diversity as if they’re in a gym they see everybody but they don’t think ‘I don’t see a black coach educator, I rarely see an Asian official’ – they don’t think about these things so it was useful to highlight these issues.”*

**Bevis Allen – Project Coordinator, England Boxing**



*“Since lockdown, we have had more regular contact via phone calls, text messages and Online sessions. We have become a closer group. We are aware that for many of our participants, they may not want to go out to take part in any physical activities or are not able to due to barriers such as lack of accessible transport. We intend to continue to offer online as well as offline sessions in the future.”*

**Husnara Zaman – Intosport Coordinator, Disability Lambeth**



**England Boxing** received MEEF funding to run engagement activities surrounding the **IOC European Olympic Boxing Qualifiers** being hosted at the Copperbox Arena in London’s Olympic Park.

The programme of activities was cancelled because of the Covid-19 restrictions, including its mass participation world record attempt. The activities are set to proceed when the qualifying event occurs for the postponed Tokyo Summer Games in 2021. England Boxing were able to move its ‘Activation Days’ online in the form of workshops delivered via Zoom. These focused on mental health (in association with the charity, MIND) and racism (in association with KO DISCRIMINATION) within the context of boxing. One core learning from the project was the feedback from many of those attending, who stated that the activation days were a great way of training coaches and officials in mental health and discrimination and that they could form part of the coach education and continuing professional development programmes at England Boxing.

The **Intosport** project at **Disability Lambeth** was funded through the Active Londoners’ fund and designed to expand referral partnerships, build capacity to deliver services and attract people with mental health difficulties to the programme. The focus of the programme is to help improve the wellbeing and activity levels of people with a variety of disabilities.

One of the biggest barriers to participation found prior to Covid-19 was the lack of appropriate transport options to venues to take part in physical activity. Many participants were also nervous of returning to live sessions as lockdown eased. Participation levels increased when sessions were put online, and participants were attending more sessions, as a significant barrier had been removed. The additional support and training put in place around using technology meant that participants were now more confident in checking emails and using services like Zoom. Staff also felt that their knowledge of how to run online sessions had improved and that they improved their systems, for example by pre-recording sessions, planning in advance and using a tripod to ensure stability and ease of viewing.

*"I think the actual content and the topics were very appropriate and relevant to the kids. I think it was a chance for them to reflect on their experience of the last couple of months and a chance to share some ideas and express themselves a little bit in quite a safe and open environment."*

Community Leader – Arsenal Community Foundation



**Big Ideas** creates and supports projects which bring communities and cultures together. It received MEEF funding to run the **'No Barriers 2020'** project, which was designed to engage school children across London in the UEFA Men's European Football Championships (EURO 2020). The project was also implemented across the Republic of Ireland.

No Barriers 2020 had been piloted successfully and was launching to schools when Covid-19 restrictions were put in place. Big Ideas refocused the project to become **'No Barriers at Home'**, which saw a resource pack being made available to both primary and secondary teachers and students online, and to community groups. The online resources for students and teachers consisted of 12 'host city worksheets' and 12 'champion cards' available to either download or view on the Big Ideas website, along with 12 supporting videos for young people working at home independently. All digital resources were available in both the English and Irish language. The programme was cross-curricular, with activities for geography, history, literacy, art, and maths, as well as raising awareness of key social issues, such as mental health, citizenship, discrimination, and isolation. Young people were able to upload and see their work featured alongside submissions by other children from London and its twin project in the Republic of Ireland, with the aim of reducing feelings of isolation many were experiencing during lockdown. The project focus was tweaked slightly but largely remained true to the original ethos of tackling fundamental issues of integration and cohesion through stories from the football field in a relevant and accessible context.

*"In collaboration with the academies, we adapted our plans and used zoom to ensure the young players could continue learning, fulfil their commitments to deliver a community project and support other young people during lockdown."*

Bev Amaechi – CEO, Player Voice



**Football Unites** is a GLA matched funded partnership between **Player Voice** and the academies of **Crystal Palace F.C.** and **West Ham United F.C.** The pilot engaged young academy players in planning, delivering and evaluating a community participation project in partnership with their chosen community partner. It followed an academy-wide ballot, focussed on the issue that the young players determined as heavily impacting their local community. The project was to be 'player-led', with players forming 'leadership groups' who spearheaded activities in their clubs.

With the onset of Covid-19, plans changed and activities moved online. West Ham F.C. partnered with Britannia Village Primary School and focused on transition, resilience, having ambition and setting goals. They produced two videos and ran zoom calls with two classes of Year 6 pupils to offer encouragement and advice about moving to secondary school and dealing with new situations and the pandemic. Crystal Palace chose to work with 'Your City Says No' (YCSN), which supports parents and young people who are at risk or affected by violent crime. The group produced a video to assist topic discussions and contributed to three online Zoom sessions led by YCSN with young people from the 'Preventing Knife Crime' (PKC) project in Croydon. Themes included wellbeing, goal setting, stop and search, grooming, county lines, the effects of drugs and first aid for catastrophic bleeds. A football tournament was then held on the 29 August 2020 with FA social distancing measures / transmission mitigations in place.



*“MATP@Home became our new way of working as we had to re-evaluate how we delivered as it became apparent our support had to be directed to families and carers during the lockdown months.”*

**Helen Derby – MATP National Manager, Special Olympics**



**Special Olympics Great Britain** provides sports coaching and athletic competitions for people of all abilities and disabilities. The Active Londoners funded **Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP)** was created to enable people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) and complex needs to take part in meaningful physical activity within their community. Many individuals with complex needs are not traditionally involved in sport and are underrepresented, due to the complexity of their needs. The project sought to create improvements in motor skills, social skills, physical fitness, and functional ability to ultimately improve health and mental wellbeing.

Covid-19 limited access and created a further barrier to participation. It was apparent from consultations with partners that many individuals, families, carers and organisations were exhausted, stressed and anxious due to the uncertainty of what was to come. In many cases, support had ceased for families, and individuals stopped accessing community services and schools due to closures. The programme was adapted to be implemented remotely and called **MATP@Home**, with carers and family members supporting participants with activities at home. Virtual training, mentoring and 1:1 support was offered. Learning was shared with non-traditional partners, including families who needed support and guidance and organisations outside of London. Moving activities online has allowed the engagement of more individuals with PMLD to experience and benefit from the MATP.

*“Our embedded, relationships-based approach meant we had strong existing relationships across a young person’s life. Practitioners have been able to support, motivate and encourage young people to appreciate the value of learning, through a mixture of school-based target-setting as well as exciting projects linked to young people’s passions. We were pleased to be able to reach 499 young people – 93% of the total cohort.”*

**James Reeves – Grants and Community Manager, Football Beyond Borders**



**Football Beyond Borders (FBB)** supports young people who are passionate about football but are disengaged at school. Through the joint Mayor of London / Comic Relief ‘London Together’ fund, ‘**Every Ends**’, aimed at developing mutual trust and improving the social and emotional competencies of young people, whilst reducing prejudices. Football is used as a catalyst for developing long-term, trusting relationships between young people, their peers and practitioners, with the aim of reducing school exclusions. ‘Every Ends’ integrates young men from different FBB programmes and mutually antagonistic postcodes within a safe space for additional social and emotional support.

In response to Covid-19: social media was utilised for communication; therapeutically trained practitioners developed a flexible approach for young people to engage with 1:1 therapy in non-clinical settings, and; to maintain routine and consistency for participants, the ‘**Virtual School Day**’ was created after a five-day design sprint with stakeholders, partners and schools. It consists of passion projects chosen by participants, group sessions and independent learning and wellbeing activities. These were supported by calls from trained therapists to discuss wellbeing and concerns.

*“Because of Covid-19, our approach had to be amended. Instead, we fast tracked our plans to expand our use of our monitoring and evaluation platform, Upshot and created online surveys. This meant that we lost our baseline/endpoint approach, but in the circumstances, it was a case of needs must. These were rolled out throughout May, the last month of the [Champion Girls] project. We were able to supplement these surveys with additional qualitative and quantitative approaches that were undertaken at different delivery milestones.”*

**John Jones – Sports Development Manager, London Youth**



**London Youth** focuses on improving the lives of young people in the capital city. Its supports and builds the capacity of a network of 650 youth-focused organisations utilising sport, outdoor learning, employability, arts, culture, and youth social action to support, develop and challenge young people. The GLA-funded ‘Champion Girl’ (Active Londoners) and ‘Active Talent’ (Workforce) projects both started before the Covid-19 pandemic. ‘**Champion Girls**’ was nearing completion, but the pandemic meant that final activities had to be cancelled and end point data could not be gathered in the planned way. ‘**Active Talent**’ brings together 15 organisations delivering a 12-month staged programme, and provides training, development, and activation opportunities for at-risk 16-24-year-olds with leadership potential in the community sport workforce.

Both projects relied on an approach underpinned by a paper based ‘activity questionnaire booklet’ that was issued to each participant and included baseline/end point questions focused on the key outcomes, as well as some additional end point

questions to gauge further learning. As booklets were held and stored at partner offices which were closed during lockdown, it was impossible to evaluate the ‘Champion Girls’ project, as initially planned. As Active talent launched in January 2020, recruitment of participants by the partner organisations had only just started, which posed an opportunity to change how the baseline survey could be conducted.

The project teams liaised and moved all output and survey data collection onto **Upshot**, an online platform for measuring impact, developed by the Football Foundation. London Youth motivated and trained its partners to use the system and then supplemented its data collection with online focus groups and interviews, to ensure a full picture could emerge and to mitigate the loss of the baseline data for Champion Girls. Active Talent is also using similar methods, circumnavigating the barriers. It has found the response from partners to be very positive and has allowed continual access to data, rather than waiting until the end of a project to receive data or rely on a third party to upload results onto a central database.

Online training events in different aspects of monitoring and evaluation have been established for members. These include developing a theory of change for a project or organisation, planning evaluations and developing data collection tools.



### Monitoring and Evaluation: Planning your Organisation Evaluation

**Details**

**Agenda:**  
This training workshop will introduce you to the key concepts in impact measurement and give you the skills and knowledge to help you evaluate outcomes of your project or programme. During the workshop, you will have an opportunity to consider different methods for gathering evidence and start to build a monitoring, evaluation & learning plan. This course can be taken as a standalone workshop however we recommend also coming to our Creating a Theory of Change training to help build on the skills learnt in that workshop.

**Date:** 03 December 2020 - 03 December 2020  
**Time:** 9:30 am - 1:30 pm  
**Location:** Virtual, details will be sent 24 hours before training

[Attend](#)

London Youth are testing new ways of sharing results, findings and learnings with different populations, and have recently appointed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) consultants Shepherd and Moyes to support this work. It has disseminated its findings on Champion Girls via a dedicated webpage and short video, rather than a paper-based report. You can view the dedicated webpage for Champion Girls [HERE](#).

## Section 3: 'Building Back Better' – Transforming Community Sport in London

Reflecting upon both the second Sport Unites Impact Status Report (pre-Covid-19) issued in March 2020 (which summed up the impact of the programme over the first two years), as well as the subsequent impact upon and response of the community sport sector in London to the pandemic (outlined in the previous sections of this report), it is increasingly clear that community sport does and should play a significant role in addressing a broad range of complex social issues facing London. To 'build back better', the recovery process needs to not only move the sector from its current response to the crisis and back to 'normality', but also encourage the formation of a shared agenda across key institutes and actors, which moves the sector towards a more constructive, progressive and sustainable position. If the sector is to be successful at delivering positive outcomes at sufficient scale that have a meaningful impact at a London-wide level, it needs to develop systems and structures that help to align everyone's individual efforts. Lockdown measures are isolating organisations and individuals and are taxing people's emotional capital around crisis response. A coordinated plan can help to alleviate this, if the sector can move towards enhancing partner synergies and develop joined-up interventions that target key issues

which can be sustained over long periods of time. A generational change approach, as demonstrated in Figure 4 and adapted from Lederach (2005, p139), is key to the sustainability of longer-term impact and is stronger when multiple actors work together. In the current context of 2020, the 'crisis intervention' is the community sport sector's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as to the other issues that are potentially now having an even greater impact upon Londoners, such as low inactivity levels, mental health issues, social isolation, high knife crime and tensions between different ethnic communities.

This collective approach, however, will demand an increasingly well-coordinated, cross sector 'systemic' response from a broad coalition of London stakeholders if it is to generate both the scale and breadth of impact upon social issues experienced by Londoners. This, of course, is not a new insight, and efforts have been underway for many years to develop a more connected and coordinated sports sector, however, there are several reasons why a 'system wide' coalition approach in the post-Covid-19 context, now appears to be more relevant than ever.

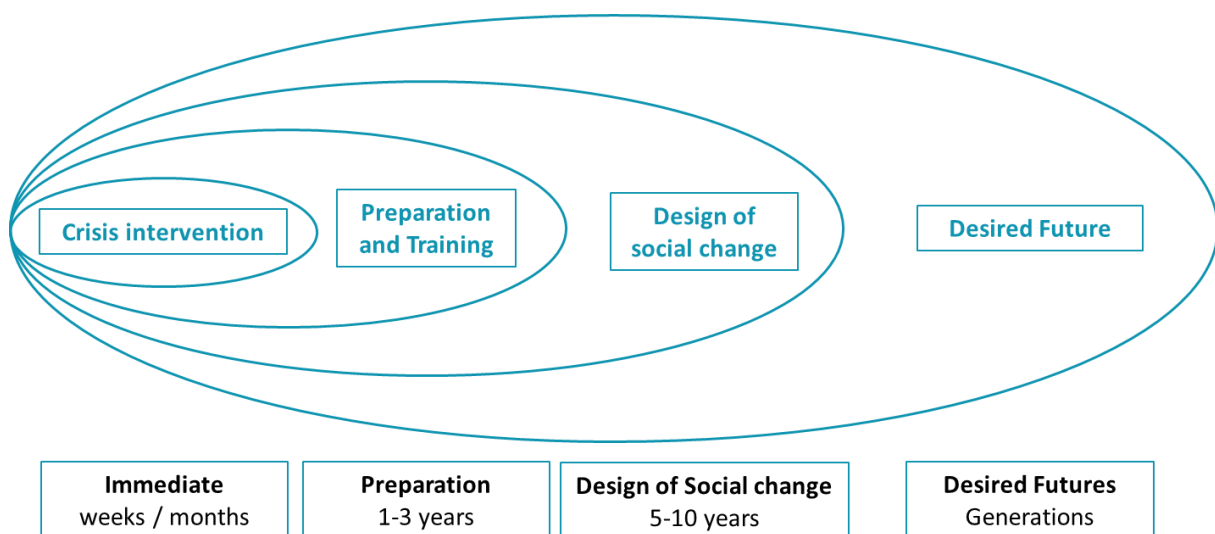


Figure 4: Generational change



### 3.1 Changing breadth and scope of social issues affecting Londoners

As the Mayor of London governs for all Londoners, it has been important for the Community Sport team to create and deliver a Sport Unites programme that speaks equitably to the broad range of social issues faced by Londoners, as well as the diverse population bases that exist across many different boroughs. An important and increasingly recognised feature of community sport is its' potential to be used in an intentional way to work upon and address many different issues and populations, reinforcing other established developmental approaches, at relatively low cost. It, thereby, lends itself well to this kind of broad-based policy intervention. However, each one of these developmental issues currently being addressed by Sport Unites are large in scale and complex in their aetiology, requiring an array of diverse cross-sector actors to work together to create locally adopted and sustainable solutions that can operate at 'scale' to meet the growing needs of Londoners. Whilst Sport Unites has already established a successful track record of delivering social outcomes across its portfolio of individual interventions, the pandemic has likely reversed at least some of the social development gains (e.g. increasing levels of social isolation and additional strains on mental health and wellbeing), and potentially further widened the gap between the supply of relevant services and the actual needs of all Londoners, particularly those from more socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Currently, we are experiencing a time when even greater barriers to access sport now exist, which are exaggerated by the deteriorating social-economic conditions that are likely to be faced for a long time to come. For community sport to genuinely create meaningful impact on multiple complex social issues at a pan-London population level, it will need to harness all its' collective assets and efforts. Actions will need to align, and its' collective vigilance utilised to better see all the available resources and solutions. The Mayor's Community Sport team will need to re-think *how it can more effectively position itself to leverage its' strategic position*

*amongst other London and national stakeholders to support this.*

### 3.2 Cross-sector involvement is needed to catalyse and sustain results

Community sport and, by extension, the Sport Unites programme, has always faced a complex challenge around partnerships and collaboration, outside of its own 'community sport system' boundaries. For example, the challenge of overcoming competing agendas for resources, as well as often competing messages between 'sports development' and 'sport for development'. Community sport has the proven potential to play an important role across a broad social development agenda but, in attempting to address this diversity of social issues, it opens itself up to a level of complexity that is beyond the scope of any single sector to address alone.

A cross-sector approach involving close collaboration with, for example, the health sector, education sector or criminal justice sector is vital for two inter-connected reasons. First, community sport needs to take advantage of the service capacities and skills of these other sectors to deliver social development results more effectively and sustainably. Secondly, it needs to gain non-sport sector recognition of its' true value proposition to increase available resources and expand its' role in future. These are mutually reinforcing reasons to further adopt a cross-sector approach at a pan-London coalition level, allowing organisations in other sectors to 'see' and experience the impact through sport, as full partners in the co-creation, which will strike at the heart of Sport Unites vision.

### 3.3 Need to create a bigger return on investment

Diminishing resources because of the economic and social impact of Covid-19 have already led to huge demands upon the public purse, meaning competition for funds will be much greater now and in the future. For example, the final round of the Stronger Communities fund received 254 applications, requesting a total of £1,746,799. In comparison, the three previous rounds

combined amassed 135 applications, requesting a total of £590,623. Sport for development will also be competing against other perceived priorities, such as tackling food poverty, homelessness and domestic abuse. It can be surmised that approaches demonstrating the potential for significant, cross-cutting social returns from any public investment will be better candidates for future investment. These approaches should be further strengthened to enhance efficiencies on a 'systemic' level and, thereby, potentially translate **'fewer inputs into more outcomes'**. The key challenge will be to clearly demonstrate the overall social return from community sport investment in London'. This includes ensuring that evidence is produced to inform the sector of the social return on investment, as with the work of Sport England outlined in Section One.

### 3.4 Further unite the community sport sector in London

The community sport sector in London has benefitted from many different organisations' efforts, over many years, to bring it together in solidarity. This includes community sport partnerships, which have spanned many years, spearheaded now through London Sport and the mayor of London, along with others who have worked in 'pockets of collaboration', sometimes united through a common funder, such as Sport Unites, or a common methodology, such as Laureus Model City London (MCL). However, we should be aware that the current crisis could serve to fragment the community sport sector in London. As can be seen from the previous sections of this report, there are significant operational challenges experienced by organisations in delivering community sport safely and reaching beneficiaries effectively, and this has led to a greater need to share experiences through rapid dissemination of information and new learning across the sector, which has been embraced by many organisations. The steep learning curve that began in March 2020 (and is likely to continue for some time) has provided a strong impetus for collaboration across the sector, saving both time and money to all participating organisations to find new solutions. However, an equal and opposing

force is likely to also arise during this time of crisis and scarcity of resources. Overall competition for limited funds is likely to increase, which can drive more individualistic thinking and a focus upon one's own internal, short-term agendas. This is opposed to more collective action and working towards joint goals, which requires, by definition, a more enlightened level of self-interest and a more long-term and externally focused mindset.

The Mayor's Community Sport team will, no doubt, face these opposing pressures themselves, along with other community sport stakeholders in London, if it pursues a more joined-up coalition approach to delivering its strategy in future. It will require **strong leadership with the right mindset** to ensure that collaborative efforts are accelerated, short-termism and introspection is countered and, ultimately, what is going to be most helpful to the community sport sector and Londoners in the long-term is prioritised and pushed forward.

### 3.5 Collective visibility

It is commonplace to bemoan the lack of funding/ resources and solutions to address social development problems within all sectors. It is no different within the community sport sector. However, the problem is not only a lack of resources and solutions, but the inability to accurately see and pool the resources and solutions that are already available across the sector. The power of this point was well illustrated when funders responded during the pandemic and collaborated to create the London Community response Fund (LCRF) - a single fund to simplify access to emergency funding and enhance visibility and awareness of the resources available, which provided a lifeline to organisations most in need.

When each community sport organisation operates and views opportunities through an entirely independent lens, it is easy for many of the available opportunities for growth and development to be concealed from their view. A more collective approach, where independent agendas become aligned and transformed into shared agendas, will sharpen the whole community sport sectors' collective vision. By developing a shared understanding

of the problems that sport can address and an appropriately framed common agenda, communities and organisations are more likely to see relevant opportunities as they emerge, causing previously invisible solutions and resources to materialise. The ongoing vigilance of multiple organisations with a shared intention **operating under some rules for interaction** will likely empower all stakeholders together, flexibly and quickly, to see and act on emerging opportunities.

### 3.6 A Long-Term Vision and Collective Approach for Community Sport in London

The current pandemic has created a natural break in the 'business as usual' approach to delivering community sport in London and, therefore, an opportunity to both step back and re-think how things are being done. Out of any crisis, new innovations and ways of working often emerge. Covid-19 experience to date has been no different, with the emergence of home working, digital transformation of services and new perspectives on home / work life balances, being a few to mention. Many organisations within the community sport workforce have had their role extended to supporting beneficiaries above and beyond the traditional skillset and, therefore, there is a danger that the opportunities presented can be offset by the emotional strain on people's creativity and ability to respond to changing levels of crisis and transition response.

It is also a feature that during times of crisis, people often pull closer together, and the finer qualities of both individuals and organisations emerge under the stress and strain of challenge and adversity. To this end, we have seen greater levels of flexibility, cooperation and sharing of knowledge and resources across the Community Sport sector in recent months, both in London and further afield. As we enter the 'new norm' created by the pandemic, we posit that now is an ideal time for community sport leaders to build upon this spirit of togetherness and start asking more visionary questions (Patscheke et al. 2014), such as:

**What if** funders, local and regional government, grassroots community sport

organisations and groups, sport networks and coalitions, sports industry and sport's governing bodies worked together to identify and apply the best strategies for improving the lives and well-being of Londoners through sport and physical activity?

**What if** these strategies addressed all the key elements of both increasing levels of sport and physical activity, whilst also achieving many important social development outcomes, ensuring that change is comprehensive and lasting?

**What if** community sport 'bounced back' from Covid-19 better and more resilient than before, to become a success story, rising out of the pandemic to create more health improvements, more prosperous and integrated communities, better education and employment prospects, and a more tolerant and safer London?

These questions are posed to paint a powerful picture of optimism borne out of the conditions London now faces, which **London's Community sport sector leaders** could rally around to help kick-start a more coordinated and effective response to the challenges faced by Londoners.

### 3.7 Building Back Together

This vision is of a London-wide coalition of partners, gathered from within and outside of the community sport sector (i.e., cross-sector) and involved in collective action at different levels (local neighbourhood / borough / pan-London) to more effectively support the widespread diffusion of the community sport approach to development and intervention. It will convene, coordinate and align new and existing partners and networks to clarify the 'key outputs' and results to be achieved. This will inform decision making, strengthen systems and processes through the raising and alignment of funding to meet local needs and produce insight to strengthen the community sport delivery field. This collaborative action is designed to affect large-scale system change. To achieve this systems-level impact, there needs to be a clear and consistent focus from leaders to engage across the sector, and with other sectors and actors to:





Figure 5: A Model for Building back Together (John Kania and Mark Kramer, 2014)

**Advocate** – Speak with a common voice / clear message and support the widespread adoption of agreed principles and quality standards across existing provision, and support a policy shift towards greater support for the adoption of community sport for development approaches at the grassroots.

**Convene** – Bring partners together to help align the interests of all other relevant cross-government and inter-governmental departments (e.g., health, education, transport, crime / antisocial behaviour units, community cohesion departments etc.) with the mutual interests of the community sport sector.

**Strengthen** – Build the capacity and capabilities of the workforce to provide high quality and sustainable community sport programmes.

There currently exists a strong array of actors across London that have an active stake and involvement in the community sport sector. There are existing network and partnership efforts that already go a long way to encourage community sport actors to work together. These include the Commonwealth (working internationally), the Sport for Development Coalition (working nationally) and various actors working locally. Alignment of these entities and others, alongside the engagement

of new, cross-sector partners, is the next stage in the development of the community sport sector in London, in pursuit of greater social impact.

Examples around the world of successful collective action and impact networks show that these kinds of transformations take time and considerable effort, requiring a focus upon establishing the right conditions for a coalition to thrive. These conditions (Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011) include:

**Common agenda** – All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problems and a joined-up approach to solving the problems through agreed-upon actions.

**Shared measurement** – All organisations agree on the way success will be measured and reported, with a shortlist of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

**Mutually reinforcing activities** – A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

**Continuous communication** – All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.

**Backbone support** – An independent entity dedicated to the initiative that provides ongoing support and guides the collective vision and strategy. It supports aligned activities, establishes shared measurement practices, builds public will, advances policy and mobilises resources.

In painting this picture of collective action and framing the conditions that need to be established, we are simultaneously presented with both a compelling vision for change, alongside a daunting logistical and resource challenge to realise it. The issue being that currently, no single organisation is either resourced or geared towards effectively addressing the challenge of providing ‘backbone support’ to this kind of effort. What is, therefore, needed right now is a **practical**

**entry point** for community sport leaders in the short-term to rally around, as an important and pivotal step towards this longer-term vision for community sport in London.

Based upon a combination of factors, including work that is already underway, existing appetite and current need, we propose **shared measurement** to be a practical entry point for collaboration, which would serve to simultaneously address several strategic goals for a number of key partners across London. This also presents an opportunity for the Mayor of London to champion this first step, as a natural extension to the Community Sport team's 'thought leadership' role. The initial goals of a shared measurement approach across a pan-London Coalition of partners could include:

- The production of a framework for shared measurement and management practices;
- the establishment of an accessible learning community environment, open to all;

- creation of simplified, collaborative funding mechanism, systems and processes that align to these practices, and;
- development of a platform to showcase impact and advocate for the sector.

In forming this apparatus, the coalition can strengthen and expand existing initiatives. This might include working with the London Community Response Fund (LCRF) as a funding mechanism; expanding the online 'Sport Unites Learning Community' for sharing good practice, research and new ideas with the sector and wider public, and; widening access to training for organisations in Impact Measurement Management (IMM), already accessed by Sport Unites grantees.

In the next section, we will outline what we mean by shared measurement, why it is important and how it will help community sport organisations to better achieve their strategic goals. It considers the efforts already underway that represent a great starting point, and the practical steps to establishing a shared measurement approach across London.



Photo Credit: Ernest Simons

*“Through working with schools, we are confident that the Model City Project has created a strong community partnership that will continue to grow and support each other.”*

**Manager – Sport Impact  
Generations Active BFH Coalition (Hounslow)**



Credit: Laureus Sport for Good Foundation / HR Sports Academy

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) were appointed by the **Laureus Foundation** as the evaluation and learning partner for the **Model City London (MCL)** programme. In November 2020, a report was issued that covered the period between April and October 2020 in terms of delivery and the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on grantee organisations and coalition partners. Five broad themes emerged from the ongoing experiences of community building, project delivery and participation in sport and physical activity during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Credit: Laureus Sport for Good Foundation

The impact of the pandemic on grantees and coalitions continues to cause individual and community hardship and challenges for delivering opportunities for connection through sport and other activities. However, the strong foundations established during the first 12-18 months of MCL have helped to create strong bonds and trust between local organisations and communities and have also helped to alleviate some of these hardships and enabled a different kind of delivery since the end of the first lockdown.

Coalitions and many grantees are adapting their delivery approaches and engagement continues to increase. The cumulative figures and patterns of engagement in different opportunities created through the MCL programme are encouraging and demonstrate a vibrancy which the pandemic may be denting but has not diminished. At the time of writing, there were concerns about the impact of further local and national lockdowns which is not reflected in these figures, and which will only become evident once the final reports are available in 2021.

Grantees are growing more confident in capturing the difference they are making to beneficiaries' lives through MCL. They are able to share positive stories of the difference a wide variety of activities and opportunities for engaging is making for different people in the three Coalition areas. They have revisited their own indicators and data sources to ensure that a realistic picture of change can be shared in their reporting.

Evidence is also continuing to increase about the positive changes that individual grantees and Coalition members are experiencing, as well as about stronger partnership working in the three areas.

While the achievements of grantees are consolidating, progress is fragile, given the backdrop against which MCL is being delivered; and Coalitions and grantees are anxious about the future sustainability of the work they are undertaking together.

The full report can be seen [HERE](#).



## Section 4: Shared Measurement

Shared Measurement in the sport for development sector involves organisations that are working on similar issues, developing both a common understanding of what to measure, and, tools that can be used by charities, community groups, social enterprises and funders working towards similar goals. Shared measurement is both a product and process:

- **Product** - any tool that can be used by more than one organisation / entity to measure impact.
- **Process** - mapping out a sector-wide theory of change as a theoretical framework for the change process community sport will drive. The process involves the active engagement and collaboration of stakeholders and creates a common understanding of the community sport sectors' shared outcomes across London.

If successful, shared measurement will result in improved efficiencies and effectiveness for the community sport sector. It will help to: improve standards in relation to Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) (which, in turn, will increase the consistency and comparability of data and results); save individual organisations the cost and time of developing their own tools; reduce duplication in reporting efforts; allow beneficiaries to be tracked through multiple different services and interventions, and; encourage organisations to think about how the sector can work together to achieve social change.

Organisations will begin to understand what works, what their role and contribution is within the wider sector and how their work links to that of similar organisations. This will make it easier to learn from one another, understand what works best for different social issues and, crucially, what leads to the best outcomes for Londoners. Comparable and robust data on impact will also allow the coalition to benchmark the results of organisations working in a thematic field to understand what interventions are required to address different social issues. Finally, it will also ensure a robust

evidence base is being built concerning what works and how it works, which can be used by multiple audiences, including practitioners, funders and policy makers.

We describe the sustainable growth and development of the sector in London through the lens of two inter-related processes - 'scaling out' and 'scaling up'. By introducing shared measurement practices across London, both processes will be facilitated and enabled, ensuring the sector uses evidence-based decision making to sustainably grow the impact of sport in London.

### 4.1 Scaling Out

A key goal of those delivering on the ground should be to develop and 'mature' their programmes over time to be more effective and efficient at achieving their social goals and sustaining results long-term. Figure 6 outlines the stages of programme development that are currently used in the assessment of Sport Unites grantee case studies to frame the results from an intervention. Shared measurement, IMM and learning practices embedded at the outset will serve each stage of the process. Initial project design can, therefore, be based upon the right assumptions from existing knowledge of what works; and shared measures can be used to benchmark effectiveness, demonstrate value for money and provide new insights into what is effective. Being intentional about the maturation process not only ensures that the grantees are in the best position possible to do more for (or better by) their existing beneficiaries, but it also acts as an important forerunner to some in 'scaling up' (if 'scaling up' is their goal).

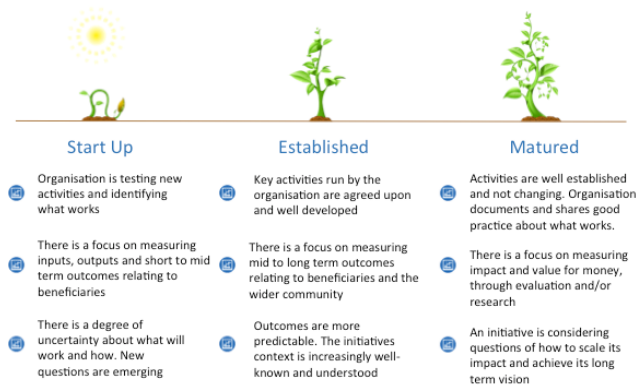


Figure 6: Stages of Project Development

## 4.2 Scaling up

‘Scaling Up’ is the process of supporting strong organisations to deliver cost-effective solutions to proactively develop a strategy and clear route to affecting more beneficiaries and / or covering a larger geographic area and appropriately ‘gearing up’ for their growth journey ahead. Nesta’s report ‘In and Out of Sync’ identified that scalable social innovations often are:

- relevant beyond their initial context;
- relatively simple;
- clearly better than the alternatives, and;
- do not rely solely on the talents of specific individuals.

Not all programmes should or need to ‘scale up’, as their local focus may indeed be what makes them effective. For others, ‘scaling up’ will be an important route to achieving their long-term mission. However, ‘scaling up’ a community sport programme that is not ready, or cannot reliably prove their approach is effective, is, at best, a waste of precious social resources and, at worst, of active harm to organisations and participants. Knowing what, when and how to scale up is key, as a ‘one size fits all’ approach is a recipe for failure. Some interventions are more impactful when they are targeted to a small populations’ needs and context, and these interventions can still contribute and provide insight that might be used with groups.

The most important capability for an organisation is to understand what impact (both positive and negative) its work has upon its beneficiaries. In terms of scaling up, a key

question suggested by Bradach (2003) is whether there is ‘enough substantive evidence of success to justify replication’. What constitutes ‘enough’ depends upon context (e.g. expanding ten sites to 100 needs more burden of proof than opening a second).

Deciding what to scale up from a funder perspective should be based upon a thorough process and analysis of information provided by a community sport delivery agency. Brookes *et al.* (2010) outlined the process in Figure 7, whereby a funder / network organisation: scans the field (or its own portfolio of projects) for organisations that meet social objectives; shortlists potential approaches, organisations and models for further investigation; assesses the available evidence of those shortlisted organisations, and; filters down further to a final list of proven, cost effective approaches for ‘scaling up’.

Having an independent body develop the shared measurement approach ensures that measures do not favour any one particular outcome or activity. Effective IMM and learning processes alongside this will help garner the finer detail of what worked and the extent to which the approach is valued. Decisions can, therefore, be evidence-based, which makes the ‘scaling out’ / maturation of interventions an important forerunner to ‘scaling up’.

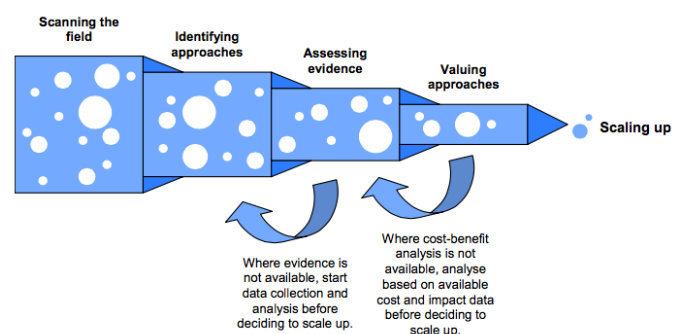


Figure 7: Scanning and scaling

## 4.3 Developing a Shared Measurement System

Figure 8 outlines three phases to develop a shared measurement system. This is modified from ‘Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact’ (Kramer *et al.* 2009) and the important considerations for success in London are outlined further below. These draw upon

the prior experience of inFocus and available research.

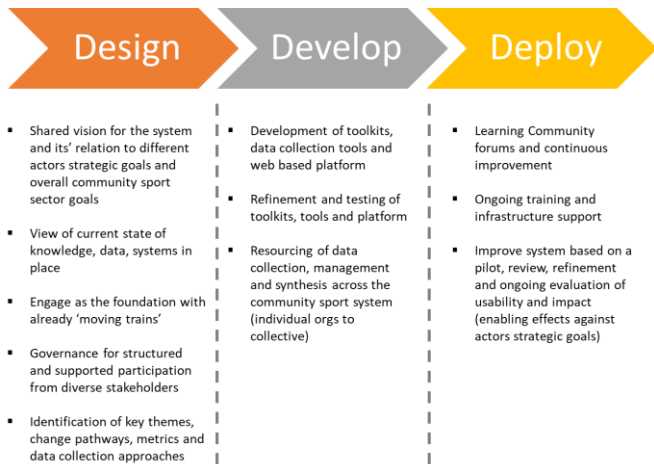


Figure 8: Development Phases for Shared Measurement

### 4.3.1 Phase 1: Design

#### Creating a shared vision for the system that speaks to different actors' strategic goals

There are several steps involved in developing a shared measurement system across a group of actors and, therefore, considerable effort and time will need to be invested. This first step is so important in the process, as it addresses the need to establish rational 'buy-in' and full commitment to the process from key actors. Table 1 frames the kind of strategic capabilities and goals that could be achieved, from the perspective of the three main roles being played within the community sport sector in London – funder, network or sector body and delivery agency.



Community sport sector role	Strategic capability / goal addressed
Funder; network or sector body	Identify the most effective solutions to fund and innovative approaches to further research from across London
	Develop clear benchmarks against which grantees / network members can assess their own progress and further improve ('scaling out')
	Develop the evidence base for advocacy efforts and make the case based on overall impact of the sector
	Make informed, objective decisions about 'scaling up' initiatives
Delivery Agency	Simplify reporting for grantees and delivery agencies in general
	Gain the ability to mature community sport projects / programmes ('scale out') to achieve greater impact, based on wider visibility of available evidence and learning about what works
	Make strategic decisions about what, where, when and how to 'scale up' initiatives in a sustainable way
	Simplify the reporting process back to multiple funders

Table 1: Strategic Capabilities and Goals of a Coalition

#### View of current state of knowledge, data and systems in place

It is pertinent to understand what already exists within the context of the wider community sport sector that makes the building of a shared measurement system a viable long-term proposition. Beyond the urgency of need for a new way of working, that could further galvanise the London community sport sector to act, there are a number of key assets, actors and experiences that could be consulted, involved and even integrated to avoid any



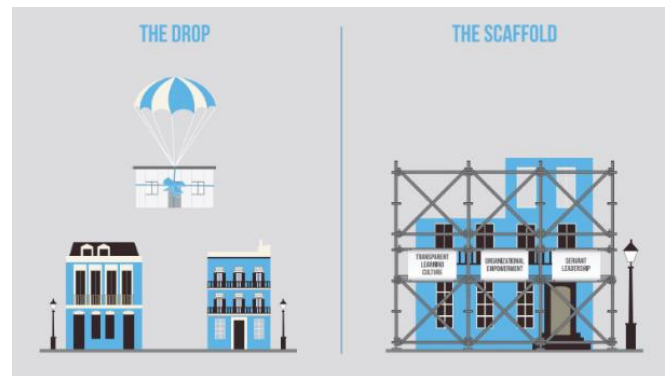
'reinventing the wheel' or unnecessary 'treading on people's toes' who already have work in motion in similar or related areas. Prior to Covid-19, the Mayor's Community Sport team were already beginning to work in a more connected way and harnessing the strengths of working with and within networks. Many of the networks listed below should be approached and could be open to a commitment to using data to set the agenda and improve collective impact.

The **London Community Response Fund** (LCRF) was set up as a response to the Covid-19 crisis. Funders across London have come together to coordinate funding to support groups responding to the needs of the London's communities. The single application point for charities and community groups enables organisations to access funding from multiple funders in a fast and efficient way. It has been designed based on insights from groups working with Londoners, to ensure that it is flexible and responds to needs as they emerge. The fund covers multiple sectors and the Community Sport team are working with the platform to distribute funding, including the YLF Summer Activity grants. It is scoping future phases of the programme, including considering a 'rolling fund' based on the LCRF model.

The **Sport for Development Coalition** is a movement of UK charities, governing bodies, funders and delivery organisations who utilise sport and physical activity as effective tools for intervention when generating positive social outcomes. It aims to provide evidence of this and advocate for the sector to funders and government. In 2015, it published an outcomes and measurement framework for sport for development work, funded by Sport England. The lessons learnt (including the need to properly resource any similar work) and the application of the framework can inform a shared measurement approach.

**Laureus Sport for Good Foundation** is a network of grantee partners that uses sport as a tool to help children and young people overcome violence, discrimination and disadvantage in their lives. It is supported by a worldwide charitable infrastructure. The Mayor

of London is in a partnership with Laureus and **Nike Made to Play** in the **Model City London** (MCL) programme, which is aimed at improving social integration through sport and empowering local people to drive the change they want to see in their community. Its aim is to empower local communities to tackle self-identified local issues. The programme has started with three pilot coalitions in Barking, Haringey and Hounslow, which utilise the scaffold approach, where a coalition of local stakeholders and organisations identify the key issues that need addressing in their local area. They develop their own strategies, vision and outcomes; issue grants to member organisations to begin work on tackling identified issues, and; monitor and evaluate the results of their work. The MCL approach operates outside of normal power structures. It is a good example of how a coalition can operate at a local level, a collective approach to decision making and shared action by building things together (i.e., the 'scaffold' approach, as opposed to 'the drop' which simply drops in a preformed solution).



The Mayor of London has entered mutually beneficial partnerships around funding with other organisations, including with the UK charity **Comic Relief** with the **London Together** programme, which is aligned to Comic Relief's commitment to fund sport for change approaches. The London Together programme is helping the two organisations better understand where and how the intentional use of sport and physical activity is appropriate and its role in strengthening communities and reducing isolation.

There are already many established relationships, working practices and funded projects and programmes with several

community sport network organisations, including **London Sport**, **Sported**, **London Youth** and **Street Games**. These represent a history and culture of collaboration to build from, with localised 'backbone support' already in place.

There have also been several prior / ongoing attempts to develop a shared measurement system for community sport, which have taken place at different levels within the community sport ecosystem. Sport England, in cooperation with the **UK sport for development coalition**, developed a toolkit in 2015 for measuring outcomes across the sport for development sector. In 2018, **Sport England** funded an England-wide mapping exercise of the data being collected at the grassroots community sport sector level and the **DCMS** commissioned a deep research into the 'Social Impacts of Sport' with a view to mapping key indicators and models of action. Internationally, in 2018, the **Commonwealth Secretariat** began and continues to elaborate a model indicator toolkit for countries to utilise in measuring the contribution of sport and physical activity within countries / regions, to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). These, and other various efforts amongst grant-makers, have evolved with each iteration and have raised the awareness amongst the sector of the importance and value of impact measurement. They have, in turn, informed the development of shared measurement toolkits by funders across their grantee portfolios, including **Laureus Sport for Good Foundation** (2015) and the Mayor of London's **Sport Unites** and **MEEF** investment programmes (2019). There are no doubt others. What is yet to occur is one, global open access measurement framework for London that can be shared by every organisation, network and funding body that is designed around London's specific needs and challenges and can feed into local, regional, national and international reporting measures.

One could describe the community sport sector in London as a hotbed for collective action and impact initiatives, including shared measurement. From these experiences, it is clear there is a good track record of collaboration and a strong interest in the ambition for a shared measurement system.

No one organisation is likely to accept a system imposed upon them, and the process of agreeing a set of shared measures will be a challenge.

### **Governance and leadership for structured and supported participation from diverse stakeholders**

Including a *diverse range of stakeholders* in the development of a shared measurement approach is key. From practitioners / delivery agencies using the tools with beneficiaries, to funders using it to monitor the impact of a grant, to sector bodies using the results to better advocate for change. Figure 9 outlines a potential governance structure to coordinate participation in shared measurement at two levels, a London Wide Shared Measurement Working Group (SMWG) and Local borough/ neighbourhood SMWG's. It outlines a cross-section of different types of organisational representation, recognising that diversity will be important to successful development and adoption.

The effort, however, will require several committed individuals or organisations to initially 'kick start' and champion the initiative, before engaging a wider audience, actors and others in a more structured way. In many approaches reviewed from the literature, the development of shared measurement was led by an organisation perceived to be independent by the sector. This meant it was better able to balance the demands of charities and funders and promote use of the approach following its development. In most cases, development was led either by a sector body, an academic institution, a think tank, consultancy or a national charity on behalf of a local network of charities. In successful cases, the independent leader tends to have a sense of ownership of the approach and continues to promote its' use. This organisation will likely need to also provide ongoing support and development of the tool(s).

It is also worth noting that most of the shared measurement approaches found in the research literature ensured that design and development were led by those working in the

sector and, in general, they allowed outcomes to be fed into a tool through a 'bottom-up' process, allowing practitioners and front-line organisations to specify the outcomes important to them, rather than imposing pre-selected outcomes on the sector. Most then supplemented the defined outcomes through reviews of the academic literature or consultation with funders and commissioners. Allowing those working in the field to specify

outcomes important to them first was key to success. So, it is likely that a balance will need

to be struck between taking a bottom-up approach and using validated work already done, whilst maintaining some overall coherency around outcomes.

Finally, initial human resource and financial support from funders is also crucial to allow a shared measurement approach to get off the ground. All the approaches reviewed within the literature had received committed funding for several years to develop and pilot their tools. The majority had funding from several different sources, which increased the projects' stability.

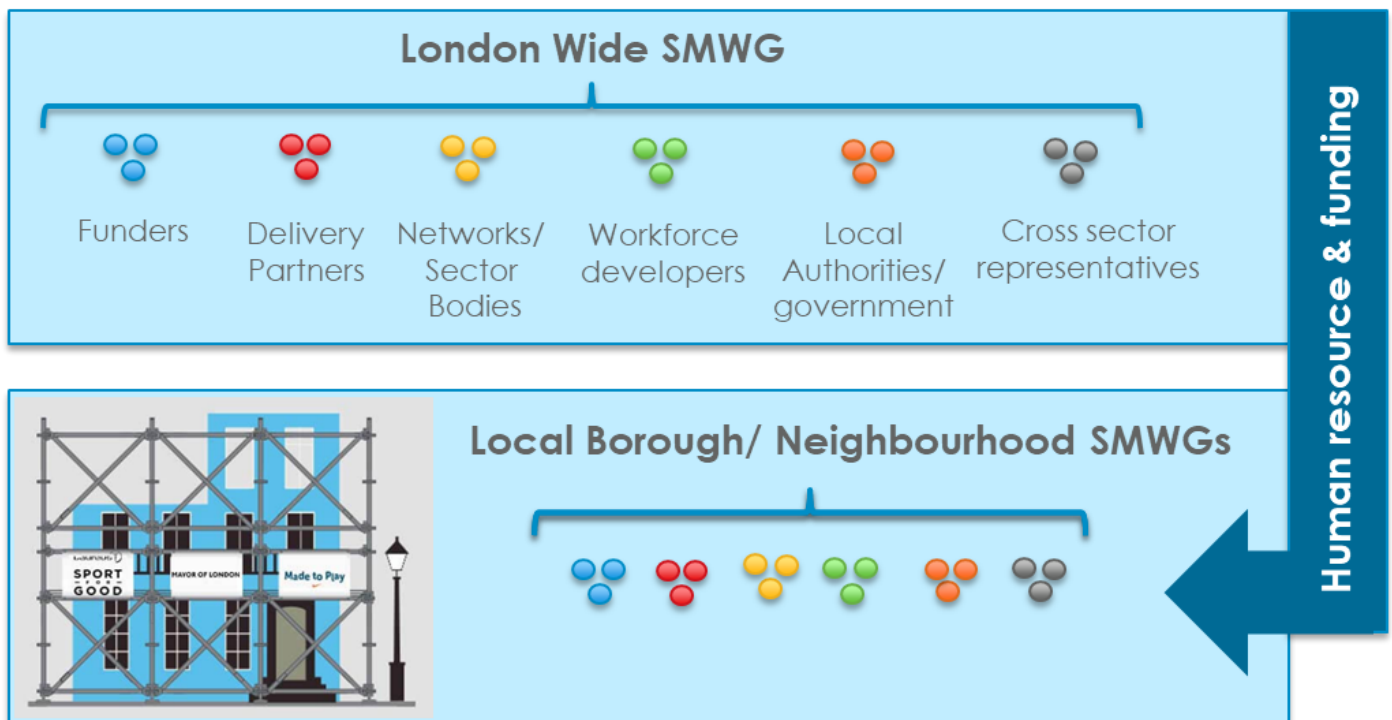


Figure 9: Governance Structure for Shared Measurement Working groups (SMWG)

### Identification of evidence gaps, metrics and data collection approaches

The process of developing any measurement framework forces those tasked with the job to consider and define the main mechanisms by which change will be brought about that can, in some way, be attributed back to the various efforts of the sector (in this case). This initial step also supports the identification of any evidence gaps which shared measurement might serve to plug, for example, how certain activities might lead to long-term outcomes. For community sport, the boundaries of where community sport starts / ends in its results can be blurry. What will be helpful early on, is to place some boundaries around what we mean

by the 'community sport sector' in London, which includes a clear understanding of what aspects of programming and results are included, which are common and where are there points of difference across the various stakeholders and actors delivering on the frontline. This will enable the group to speak with a common voice and drive consistently in the same direction. Given the diversity of social issues and audiences being targeted, a set of common goals might also be useful to frame the success and progress of the community sports sector in London, capturing the main drivers of social impact through / across all the different development 'pathways' being addressed.



In line with experiences at the global sport for development level, a common indicator is **decreasing physical inactivity levels**. This is based upon the 'sport for all' model promoting the regular participation in sport and / or physical activity by all members and sections of society. This was borne out from a threat, interestingly described by The World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2012 as a worldwide 'pandemic'. This metric serves as a starting point to all sport / physical activity programmes seeking personal and social outcomes, as the physicality of these projects is the starting point or motivating factor for beneficiaries. The community building and socialising opportunities sport and physical activity creates is key to positive feelings of belonging and connectedness and provides openings to tackle mental health and wellbeing, serious youth violence etc. and to engage and align with other cross-sector agendas to which community sport can make this contribution more significant. This could lead to thinking about two tiers of shared metrics:

**Level 1:** A small suite of indicators that are conceptually very clear, have an existing or proposed pan-London data measurement source identified i.e. an established measurement methodology and standard that is already or could be put in place. These would need to be disaggregated appropriately to be most useful.

**Level 2:** A set of context / theme or outcome-specific indicators that could be collected at the sub-regional / borough / local level, used to guide the measurement efforts of a broad range of different stakeholders gathered together to work towards a specific sub-theme, such as improving mental health of Londoners. These indicators would be more based on context, aligned to pan-London development priorities and collected by both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Most outcome areas included in any shared measurement approach will need to be relevant to all stakeholders. Involving a diverse range of stakeholders and making sure that outcomes reflect on-the-ground experiences of front-line practitioners will go some way to achieving this. However, before any outcome is finalised,

developers need to ensure consensus among different stakeholders that outcomes are meaningful.

Finally, it is essential that the tools used in shared measurement are robust and stand up to external scrutiny. Best practice when developing tools should be followed, wherever feasible, but a good starting point for these efforts will be to review all the various existing toolkits and tools developed within the London / sport for development context over recent years.

### 4.3.2 Phase 2: Develop

#### Development of toolkits, data collection tools and a web-based platform

There are a range of toolkits, data collection tools and web-based platforms already developed and in use by different organisations. Assuming these organisations buy-in to the shared measurement project, they will represent the starting point for the development process.

Creating a simple and easy-to-use tool is essential and, in our experience, is often the most difficult aspect to get right. This is where working with MEL experts who have engaged in previous efforts will be a great source of support. It will be important to overcome the challenge of ensuring the shared framework, tools and system is complex enough to be relevant to the many different activities of different organisations, but also simple and straightforward enough to use in practice.



The 'Blueprint for shared measurement' (Ní Ógáin, Svistak, & de Las Casas 2013) outlined two issues to address to make a tool accessible: First, tools must be easy for front-line staff to use and able to integrate into their day-to-day work. Second, tools must be accessible to service-users. They must avoid jargon and use simple language, where possible. Phrasing questions in the language of the service user is essential. A degree of flexibility in the shared measurement tools also emerged through the literature review, as a consistent theme, where striking a balance between standardisation and flexibility is seen as a big challenge which, for the most part, was dealt with by allowing organisations flexibility in choosing outcomes but limiting the measures / metrics in place once outcomes had been chosen.



It is also important to consider at what point the tools and measurement process is incorporated into a relevant technology platform, to aid both ease of use and access but also to allow organisations to easily compare results. The more mature shared measurement approaches available in the literature all developed some sort of software or online platform to enable users to access the tool, although this would be a downstream step to complete the shared measurement system development.

### **Resourcing of data collection, management and synthesis across the community sport system (individual organisations to the collective)**

Committed funding for several years to support the scaling up of and ongoing refinement of an approach will be important, as well as the management and synthesis of data collected. Most of the approaches in the literature had received multi-year funding to support development, pilot and rollout. That said, there would be no reason why a more iterative approach to funding couldn't be taken i.e. done in stages, with additional funding to develop things like online platforms on a project basis, the only risk being that the momentum and stability of the project could be undermined. However, without initial investment to kick-start key components of Phases 1 and 2, the project may fail to produce sufficient progress in a timely fashion and to keep all partners on board.

#### **4.3.3 Phase 3: Deploy**

The need to continually refine tools and respond to feedback from the sector will be key to ensuring any system developed is flexible and evolving, including a periodic revision of outcomes, indicators and tools for their relevance. There will be a need for continuous refinement of the system as the environment is constantly changing, considering limitations because of Covid-19, as a good example.

#### **Ongoing training and infrastructure support**

Key to successful deployment of a shared measurement system will be the accompanying training and support to target users, in terms of general capacity (skills and understanding) of Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) processes, as well as specific guidance on the integration and application of the shared measurement tools developed. This could take several forms, such as online and live training, production of easily accessible manuals and guides or 1:1 support surgeries for more in-depth consulting support.

### **Improve system based on a pilot, review, refinement and ongoing evaluation of usability and impact (enabling effects against actors' strategic goals)**

The final stage of introducing a shared measurement system will be to ensure a continuous learning loop is embedded, where tools can be piloted, reviewed and refined through ongoing formative evaluation, to ensure the needs of all stakeholders are being adequately met.

### **Learning community forums and continuous improvement**

A learning community (or community of practice) brings together organisations to exchange knowledge, share methods and results and map out both commonalities and differences in approaches. 'Community' in this context, does not refer to any specific location or form of association, rather, it is metaphorical. A learning community is characterised by a shared area of practice, mutual learning and the exploration of different ideas and perspectives by its' members. The aim of a learning community is to improve the quality of programme delivery by identifying and disseminating good practice, based upon strong MEL practices, shared measurement and research, which objectively identifies the most effective methodologies in the field.

From the experience of running learning communities, inFocus have found several benefits to running a learning community:

- Building the knowledge and understanding across the community of one another's work. This helps to avoid practitioners (particularly new entrants) 'reinventing the wheel'.
- Improving programme quality across the community through the identification and integration of good practice in programme design.

- Increasing the validity and credibility of the field of common interest and supporting efforts to scale up the field and attract new partners.
- Coordinating and improving access to the evidence base for the community and enabling practitioners to benchmark efforts effectively.

A learning community can act as the **main forum** through which wider stakeholders can participate, and a shared measurement system can be first developed, tested and deployed, ultimately serving also to share and disseminate any learning and good practices that emerge.

### **4.4 Using shared measurement as a steppingstone towards collective action and impact**

As can be seen from the activities above, the process of developing a shared measurement approach will also put many of the building blocks in place towards the development of a common agenda (i.e., a shared vision for change, which includes a common understanding of the problems and a joined-up approach to solving the problems through agreed-upon actions). The development of a common agenda will then lead to mutually reinforcing activities which, in turn, will be informed by the results of evaluation (using the shared measurement framework) and the subsequent learning discovered. Depending on the will of the partners and the success of the coalition, over time, a formal backbone organisation could be set up to support the more efficient running of coalition activities. A backbone organisation is defined as an entity with staff and a particular set of skills to serve as the coordinating body for partner organisations and agencies working directly at all levels and those outside the coalition. Over time, evaluation of project outcomes will become routine and based upon a common footing and will determine what works and what can be scaled up to maximise impact.



# Conclusion

## The Impact of Covid-19

The first section outlined the impact of Covid-19 on the community sport sector. It found:

- Londoners have been less active and have significantly less opportunities to be active because of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the implementation of lockdown measures. Public areas are busy and with limited facilities open. Many organisations are concerned that participants will be nervous of the risks of returning to sport and physical activity and the sector is working hard to mitigate these risks, ensure safety and allay fears.
- Maintaining wellbeing is a real concern, as organisations report increasing levels of anxiety from their beneficiaries – double compared to last year. Managing mental health for those with certain conditions was already difficult and the curtailment of services and support have meant many struggling to maintain the practices and routines that worked for them.
- Some organisations have reported that young people were being approached by gangs as they exercised and played in public areas. Reports from young people of domestic violence at home has become more frequent.
- The crisis highlighted the limitations in access to modern communication structures and the internet. This has limited who has access to online support and services offered by the community sport sector.
- It is evident that organisations are anxious about their ability to deliver during the crisis and to meet their commitments in terms of outputs and outcomes.
- Many community sport sector organisations fear they may not survive the pandemic and will cease to exist. Many are relying on government support schemes such as furlough.

## 'Coping' - The Response to Covid-19

The second section outlined the initial 'coping' emergency response of both the community sport sector and the Mayor's Community Sport team to the pandemic. The Covid-19 lockdown meant almost all organisations had to cease delivering face-to-face activities. During the initial phase of lockdown, many organisations responded to the immediate needs of their participants and the wider community by changing the nature of their work (albeit temporarily) and utilising staff to assist others and support those most at risk of the negative impact of the virus and social distancing restrictions on their lives. The section highlighted example case studies of how traditional sport organisations have adapted to support the community and how community-centred organisations are utilising networks developed through sport and physical activity. These included:

- Providing delivery services for food, medicine and essential supplies to those at risk and unable to travel or isolating at home.
- Establishing food banks, often in collaboration with other community organisations.
- Providing services and equipment to those at risk and at home or for key / NHS workers to ensure they were able to continue to work.
- Mental health and befriending services – online and via telephone to support those struggling with the crisis.
- Development of resources for participants at home to maintain their physical and mental health.

## 'Adapting' – Returning to Delivery

Section 3 focused on how the sector adapted for social restrictions and return to play measures. Some found ways of delivering activities online or remotely and as restrictions were eased, many began returning to face-to-face delivery, with strict protocols and return to play measures in place. It highlighted example case studies, which provide an indication of

how the sector might build upon these successes further, but also transform the sector in future to be more resilient. These included:

- Moving practical sessions online so participants can exercise in their own homes and still receive support, guidance and motivation from organisation staff. Some organisations have moved to a hybrid model, so people can choose to attend in person or join sessions online.
- Many developed innovative online webinars, seminars and information giving sessions, which brought people together, gave valuable guidance on key issues and were often done in collaboration with other organisations.
- Creating online social forums, usually after 'official' sessions, so that participants can socialise with each other and maintain / build relationships. This also contributed greatly to supporting people with their mental health and combatting feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Non-traditional avenues of communication, such as social media, were utilised to support participants, especially young people with maintaining contact with their peers and role models. This aided project and group work that could be done from home and helped young people keep routines and a sense of connection.
- Socially distanced sport guidance was developed to help guide organisations on their return to delivery.
- Many are seeking new and innovative ways of collecting data remotely and are seeking, or investing in, training, new technology and approaches to monitoring and evaluation.

## **Building Back Better – Transforming Community Sport in London**

Section Four looked at how the London community sport sector can be more resilient, robust and prepared in a crisis, as well as being sustainable and accessible. As we now enter into a new era where everything is affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, we must stand up and recognise the significant gaps in progress still

to be made across many social development areas in London, where the potential exists for sport to play a significant change agent role. We are now equipped with the technology to support new models of interaction that can mobilise action and understand better than ever the inherent dynamics of both the social sector and community sport, that present both challenge and opportunities for significant change to occur, so we must now strive to move beyond the status quo. The community sport sector must look for new ways to work together to tackle change and establish its role as a powerful asset for catalysing social transformation in the post-Covid era.

The section concludes by proposing a long-term vision for a collective approach to 'building back together' and offers a shared measurement initiative as being a practical entry point for collaboration. The premise being that it will serve to simultaneously address several strategic goals for many key partners across London, including the Mayor of London and the GLA.

### **Shared Measurement**

The final section concluded the report by outlining a strategic framework for action towards shared measurement. As public sector funding is set to come under huge strain following the pandemic and its subsequent fall out, funders and social innovators need better ways of assessing the relative success of community sport initiatives to embed themselves in their community more effectively or scale up, if appropriate and desired. There should be a healthy scepticism towards those that cannot demonstrate the positive impact of their work. Community sport initiatives that want to thrive in future will need to be willing to test, measure, evidence and continually improve their work, whilst also engage in a much wider partnership context to realise their ambitions in sustainable and effective ways.

The hope of this report is to start a real dialogue for how those involved with the community sport sector in London can best utilise this important asset to create transformational change and a better future for Londoners.

## Recommendations

This section outlines the key recommendations from all findings of this report. The recommendations seek to transform the Mayor's Community Sport team and the wider community sport sector into being more resilient, robust, efficient and effective. The below recommendations are inter-connected and, when implemented, are designed to support each other.

### Strategic Approach of the Mayor of London's Community Sport Team

The findings from this report indicate that immediate efforts by the Mayor of London should move to **providing support, training and / or funding for organisations to return to delivery**. Emphasis / priority should be given to those supporting Londoners with their **mental health, wellbeing and / or reducing loneliness and isolation**. Many organisations are beginning to tackle these issues in addition to maintaining their original aims and objectives, either through adaptations of their work or completely new activities, and these issues have been exaggerated by Covid-19.

In the medium term, moving into Phase Two of Sport Unites, the Mayor's Community Sport team should **review and update the common theory of change for both Sport Unites and MEEF and consider merging the two and streamlining**. Considering expected budgetary cuts, recovering priorities and the shifting corporate and political agendas, the Mayor's Community Sport teams' role could be as a leader in supporting the maturation process of programmes and initiatives that have the potential to achieve social outcomes. Funding can be directed to test new models and ways of working. This has already begun in Phase One of Sport Unites and MEEF-related work. Examples include providing opportunities to: make the sport media industry more diverse with the Black Collective of Media in Sport (BCOMS) / Brent Youth Foundation; player advocacy and leadership in Football Academies with Player Voice; technological developments to support open data for social prescribing with London Sport, and; the

development of place-based coalitions like MCL.

### Redesigning Sector Activities for Accessibility and Returning to Delivery

All grantees should have a **risk assessment in place outlining alternative provisions** in case of further lockdown measures or restrictions. This will ensure consistent delivery and continued work towards achieving intended outcomes.

Best practices in introducing and leveraging technology, such as the use of digital engagement to allow for wider access to community sport activities, regardless of social distance measures, need to be highlighted and disseminated to the sector. There is now a new reality of access and solutions, including a hybrid approach, where people can access and join sessions either in person or online, regardless of Covid-19 restrictions in place. Support for the sector could come in the form of **training on how to use different technologies and platforms to build the capacity of the workforce** to deliver activities virtually and remotely. The use of digital delivery should be framed within the now apparent divide between those that do and do not have access to technology and / or affordable internet. The Mayor's Community Sport team should work with other departments and organisations to **advocate for accessible and affordable technology and for the development of London's internet infrastructure / provision**.

The recommendations that emerged from the Socially Distanced Sport Pilot can be built upon further. These include **encouraging and supporting schools and other facility providers to work in partnership with community sport organisations**; and to help **build stronger local networks between organisations and stakeholders** so they are better able to react and respond to a crisis and meet the immediate needs of the communities they serve.



In collaboration with other leading sport organisations such as Sport England, Youth Sports Trust and UK Active, the Mayor of London can **actively lobby government and advocate on behalf of the community sport sector for further support** and to remain open and functioning whilst social distance measures are in place. This may mean agreeing the extent to which activities can take place at different levels of social restriction and lockdown.

### **New Considerations for Safeguarding**

With the closure of facilities and the cessation of many activities, Londoners took to using unregulated spaces such as parks and recreation grounds to socialise and exercise. Some community sport organisations have also begun using these areas to return to delivering their activities whilst their regular facilities remain closed. This has posed issues around the safety of young and at-risk people using these spaces, as new issues around sanitation, maintaining personal hygiene and gang recruitment are emerging. In addition, the use of new digital platforms, technology and remote delivery have revealed new risks for participants. Without coaches / instructors in the same room, no dynamic risk assessment can take place. **Participants need to be guided through safety precautions and adaptations of their own homes to participate in online sessions safely.** There are also dangers around young people using digital platforms without supervision from parents, guardians or organisation staff. As the use of digital platforms increase, **systems and protocols need to be in place to ensure the online safety of everyone.**

### **Collaborative Funding Strategy for Community Sport in London**

Simplified, aligned and collaborative funding mechanisms, systems and processes for the community sport sector should be further explored and investigated (e.g. the LCRF). These can be linked to any pan-London coalition developed to ensure that impact measurement is directly linked to funding priorities and expectations.

The Mayor of London should also look to actively engage with the corporate / private sector to link those wishing to invest via corporate social responsibility initiatives with the community sport sector. This can include major events hosted in London required to sponsor associated community activities and events, but also encouraging a longer-term commitment from governing bodies and sponsors, especially for re-occurring events. New, elite sporting infrastructure should have requirements for collaboration with and use by community sport partners to ensure that facilities are accessible and used appropriately. These are a few examples of how elite sport can contribute to intended collective impact and other initiatives should be explored.

### **Encouraging a Sharing Learning Environment**

The Mayor's Community Sport team should **initiate an accessible learning community environment** where insight from the grassroots is shared and good practice promoted to help build the capacity of the sector to better deliver outcomes. It should **consider taking full ownership and expanding the 'Sport Unites Learning Community'** to:

- Act as a membership platform that incorporates any organisation working within the community sport sector and not just current grantees.
- Showcase research, impact, and advocate for the sector through the hosting of branded events (online and live), such as 'thought leadership'.
- Host 'sharing' events for grassroots organisations, such as the 'Insight Fortnight', which double as another avenue of communication between funder and grantee.
- Utilise the many influential champions, such as the Mayor of London himself, Sadiq Khan, Laureus ambassadors, Comic Relief celebrities and many highly respected practitioners and facilitators based across London to help to advocate for and support the wider community sport sector.

## Expanding Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) Training

**The capacity of the community sport sector in terms of IMM needs to be built** if any shared measurement system is to be effective. Currently, organisations have varying capabilities, understanding and practices of IMM. Whilst some are very good at evidencing the impact of their work, training in IMM will help raise the overall standard of the sector. The existing, online training to appointed Sport Unites and MEEF grantees could be extended to the wider community sport sector. Any shared measurement processes developed could be easily incorporated into the training. Presently, grantees are offered the training after they have been awarded funding and have designed their activities. By extending this offer to the wider community sport sector, those applying for funding can ensure that their activity's aim, objectives and target participants align to the wider, common theory of change (be it Sport Unites, MEEF or pan-London) and contribute to collective impact. **Completion of the IMM training can also be a requirement / consideration for those applying for GLA funding.**

## Developing a Shared Measurement System

A collective and coordinated approach to developing a shared measurement approach across the London community sport sector, represents a tangible entry point for leaders within the sector to begin to 'Build Back Better Together' and create a more sustainable and resilient sports sector for the future. The Mayor's Community Sport team should **coordinate a pan-London coalition of organisations to create a framework for shared measurement and management practices to determine the success of London-wide community sport efforts and inform decision making processes.** The immediate steps to a shared measurement system include:

- Identifying the different strengths / capacities of organisations, and the synergies they

have between them, to demonstrate the potential efficiency and power of working together.

- Focusing on the design stage of the shared measurement system and looking at the key tasks in the short, medium, and longer term.
- Concentrating on outcomes that galvanize people around longer-term aspirations that are harder or more complex to achieve alone.
- Ensuring the end goal reinforces the reality that complex social challenges need interconnected solutions.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of organisations and the means of communication and accountability.
- Developing a comprehensive action plan for 3-5 years, with associated costs, to help develop the idea into reality.

An important early step in the process will be to **reach out to all actors to both advise of the intentions towards shared measurement**, outlining the main drivers and enlisting their future support and 'buy-in' to the process. This 'early warning' of intent, will be important to avoid less-clear messages emerging unofficially, which can make people suspicious of motivations and drive a more competitive mindset. This does not mean that everyone needs to be fully engaged in the process from the outset, but more that awareness is raised by a committed group of early actors.



Credit: Wheely Tots

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