

# Supporting Sport to Build Back Better - Project Re-Boot: Team Up

Supporting Sport To



Project Re-Boot



## The impact of Covid-19 on people within our communities.

Sport and physical recreation will be vital in raising the spirit and mood of our community as we come out of the necessary periods of lockdown, shielding and self-isolation that is required to stop the spread of the Coronavirus.

We know that certain groups of people have been impacted by Covid-19 more than others; and that these people may be more difficult to engage and re-engage in sport and may not be as comfortable living with Covid-19 as others. Our investment will ensure that people are encouraged and supported to participate in sport, and that through sport their confidence will grow and their anxiety reduce. Our investment in clubs and organisations at grassroots level, will support the provision of new, innovative and creative opportunities.

It presents an opportunity to try out and pilot new ideas which will help sport to Build Back Better.

Our priority groups of people for this programme include:

- ✓ Women and girls
- ✓ People with disabilities
- ✓ People with long term limiting illness
- ✓ Children & young people – especially those aged between 11 and 18
- ✓ Older people over 50
- ✓ Black and ethnic minority communities
- ✓ People on a low income
- ✓ Families
- ✓ People living in areas of greatest need

## What does the evidence tell us about who has been impacted the most?

### COVID-19 Briefing Exploring attitudes and behaviours in England during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sport England)

This survey explores the amount and type of activity being undertaken, how activity is changing over time, who people are being active with, and what they are thinking and feeling about being active. This report summarises the results from a weekly survey carried out for Sport England between 3rd April and 25th May 2020, and then monthly from June 2020 onwards.

By Mid-May, Sport England reported that physical activity levels were highest since reporting began; almost every group saw an increase in participation but many inequalities continue:

- 11% said they did no activity (any duration) in the last week, the lowest figure yet.
- 7% of children did no activity (lowest yet), and
- 93% did some (highest yet).
- The participation gaps for disability and gender continue.

In terms of worries and concerns about returning to activity; people were most concerned about social distancing (24%) and catching the virus (11%). Attitudes show that ongoing challenges and uncertainty around the virus and restrictions may be affecting attitudes.

The first report on Phase 3 was released at the beginning of November. Activity levels had fallen for men, women, people aged 16-34, social grades C2DE, people without children in the house, and disabled people or those with a longstanding condition/illness.

### Children's experience of physical activity in lockdown

This recent report from Sport England has shown how the restrictions are impacting children. While the majority of children under 16 (93%) have continued to do something to stay active during lockdown the amount of activity they are doing has fallen. The number of children meeting the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines (of taking part in sport or physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day) has dropped from 47% to 19%.

- 43% are doing less than half an hour of daily activity
- 7% are doing nothing.

Pre-lockdown inequalities have also continued. 13% of children from less affluent backgrounds have done no exercise (vs. 6% from more affluent) and 9% of secondary school pupils are also doing nothing (vs. 5% primary).

However, lockdown appears to have brought about some behavioural changes: Whilst 12% of BAME children are inactive (vs. 6% white), they are more likely to say that they have increased activity during lockdown.

Similarly, girls are more likely to say that they are being more active during lockdown.

Those from a BAME background say that are enjoying being active more than usual. This coupled with an increase in girl's activity levels, suggests that a **shift away from organised, competitive activity** appears to be **proving beneficial for traditionally less engaged groups of children.**

Barriers to being active include lack of access to usual clubs and facilities (36%), local spaces/pitches (24%) and concerns about the virus (14%). Those with access to outdoor space are more likely to have done an hour or more of activity a day than those that do not (20% vs. 13%). Significantly, over one-third of children (36%) say they've had less chance to be active as they are not at school.

Find out more: <https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/coronavirus>

## **An Overview of the Sport-Related Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children**

Compiled based on the input of 37 experts and practitioners in the fields of child rights, protection, and safeguarding in sport; this paper published in June 2020 by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights focuses on the potential impacts of COVID-19 on children associated with sport. It identifies the key impacts in four main areas:

1. On-going sport,
2. The absence of sport,
3. Children in vulnerable and special situations, and
4. Future impacts and concerns.

The paper also identifies that the crisis presents opportunities, including highlighting the **key role played by sport in society** and this can now be **better recognised and valued** at a range of levels.

At the family level, the lockdown may have **heightened awareness** of the vital need for children to be engaged on a regular basis in sport and physical activities; and has also **created opportunities** for parents and caregivers to spend more time with their children.

More broadly, the higher risk of severe complications of the disease experienced by persons with conditions associated with low levels of physical activity, such as obesity, **underscores the value of children's participation** in sports as a preventative health measure.

There may also be some good practices which have occurred due to the pandemic which can be retained as the lockdown is lifted e.g. it is reported that some children with disabilities are finding **new opportunities to engage** in sport with their coaches/teachers via the internet. This time provided during the pandemic can also be seen as an **opportunity for sport professionals to upskill** in the area of disability inclusion through for example online resources. There is also an opportunity to use this time of reflection and self-assessment to ensure that sport is a safe space when children are able to return to participate or compete.

The paper concludes with a call to action with the identification of a number of action points:

1. All key stakeholders should consider how they can **mitigate the impact** of the pandemic on children in sport.
2. **Resources** need to be developed to build capacity among sport professionals and volunteers in supporting children who are struggling due to exposure to COVID-19 or related impacts - during the pandemic as well as navigating return to play.
3. Stakeholders should **engage with children** living in a variety of contexts to learn their perceptions and concerns about the impact of the pandemic on their sporting activities and ensure that their views are taken into account in decision making.

4. In the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts should be made to **build back better sport** for children. This includes ensuring that all organised sport for children has implemented safeguarding policies and procedures; prioritises physical and mental well-being; promotes inclusiveness; and fully respects and protects the rights of children.
5. All stakeholders should identify measures to **make sport more resilient** to future crisis and to use sport as a vehicle to increase society's resilience to crisis.

Find out more:

[https://www.sporhumanrights.org/uploads/resources/An\\_Overview\\_of\\_the\\_Sport-Related\\_Impacts\\_of\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_Pandemic\\_on\\_Children.pdf](https://www.sporhumanrights.org/uploads/resources/An_Overview_of_the_Sport-Related_Impacts_of_the_COVID-19_Pandemic_on_Children.pdf)

## **NI Sport & Human Rights Forum Webinar - 'What, no Sport?'**

### **The impact of Covid-19 restrictions on Sport & Physical Activity for children'**

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Forum hosted a webinar on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, looking at the impact of Covid 19 restrictions on Sport and Physical Activity. Key note speaker Marie Murphy, Professor of Exercise & Health and Dean of Postgraduate Research at the University of Ulster presented on this topic. Professor Murphy presented findings on how Covid 19 has affected children's activity, this was evidenced through research showing the detrimental impact Covid 19 has on children and young people.

Within an education context in Northern Ireland Professor Murphy highlighted that anecdotally that although schools had reopened, the provision for sport and physical activity within schools has been impacted due to the Covid 19 pandemic, for instance;

- Schools have reopened but opportunities often reduced
- Restrictions on movement around school
- Less use of public transport (less walking)
- PE spaces (halls and gyms) repurposed for socially distanced teaching
- Even 'daily mile' participation down
- Breaks / recess reduced

During and after the first lockdown anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an **increased drop-out** (perhaps lost to sport), **children and young people's fitness, skills and development has regressed**, and there has been **increased mental health challenges** becoming prevalent with in children and young people.

In conclusion Professor Murphy identified the following high level impacts which Covid 19 has had on children and young people within the sporting context;

- Drop out already an issue has been increased – lack of participation, this had been magnified during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Covid 19 has led to the increased likelihood of increasing 'drop out' – a generation lost to sport'?
- Missed developmental opportunities (windows) to learn new skills – may disadvantage future trajectory.
- Schools had re-opened but often with limited opportunities or significantly reduced physical activity.

- Social /mental health impact of reduced peer interaction

Find out more: <https://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/sport-human-rights-forum-hosts-webinar-on-impact-of-covid-on-childrens-access-to-sport>

### **The Impact of Covid-19 on Women in Sport**

The impacts of COVID-19 are being felt harder by women and girls in many areas of life due to gender inequalities, and we see this mirrored in sport. A paper developed by UN WOMEN, '**COVID-19, Women, Girls and Sport: Build Back Better**', focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls in a global perspective specifically reflecting on Girls Participation in Sport.

The lack of physical activity, the social isolation, and deteriorating financial situations of families can lead to an **increase in their levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression challenging their mental health and wellbeing**. Under these conditions a large number of girls are at high risk for physical and sexual violence, unplanned pregnancies, and child marriage.

Girls are now **losing contact** with the vital support system that sports and schools have provided – through peer to peer learning and professional coaches and facilitators. These are sometimes the only safe space available, leaving them to face challenges such as domestic violence, increased burdens of care, and economic survival on their own. School closures represent much more than a space for academic learning and, through quality physical education curricula, provide an **opportunity for students to develop the physical, social and emotional skills needed to navigate delicate life transitions and increase individual resilience**. Some projects and schools are trying to keep children and adolescents engaged in physical education and targeted sports activities online, however not all had already developed the skills to do so, nor do all participants have access to the internet.

Many girls will be unable to return to sports practice, as traditional roles will have set in and their contributions to the economy and care for the family will be seen as necessary to family well-being and even survival, overshadowing the “luxury” of their sport practice. Moreover, families and teachers will be especially concerned for children and adolescents to catch up the missed time away from school. **Sports and physical education lessons may not be a priority**.

The UN states that even if all these barriers are overcome, grassroots organisations risk not being able to continue offering sport programmes. For girls whose parents **lost incomes**, they may have to drop out of sport because their families can **no longer “pay to play” or cover the costs** related to their engagement in sport.

Find out more: <https://lac.unwomen.org/en/digiteca/publicaciones/2020/06/covid-19-mujeres-ninas-deporte-reconstruir-mejor>

### **The Impact of Covid- 19 on Disability Sport**

The **Activity Alliance** published a report in September 2020 highlighting the impact Covid-19 has had on an impact the on sport and physical activity levels of people with a disability. Key findings included:

- The number of disabled people who are regularly active stands at 23 per cent, compared to 31 per cent of the wider population.
- Half of disabled people **worry about leaving their home to be active** (compared to 55% of nondisabled people)
- Disabled people were less likely than non-disabled people to use exercise to manage their physical or mental health.
- In August 2020 the proportion of disabled people who agree it's important to exercise regularly was 63% compared with 54% in October 2020.
- 69% say they will feel safer exercising at home
- 67% are **worried about exercising close to other people**
- 39% feel **coming out of lockdown will make it harder to be active**

Find out more: <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/5854-covid19-and-disabled-people-snapshot-september-2020>

### **The effect of Covid-19 on Lower-Socio Economic Groups Participation in Sport**

A paper <sup>1</sup> published by the Welsh Parliament - Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee noted the disparities between various economic groups during the first lockdown.

Among adults from higher socio-economic backgrounds, 39% say they were doing more activity and 32% were doing less, meaning that there has been a +7 percentage point increase in activity. However, adults from lower-socio economic backgrounds, 29% were doing more and 33% were doing less, meaning that there has been a -4 percentage point decrease among this group. It was stated within this paper the concern that **the gap in physical inactivity between social classes is widening.**

The paper also revealed a divide is also present among children. While 9% of adults overall report that their children were doing no physical activity or exercise on a typical day at the moment, for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds the figure is 14%. 23% of parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds say that their children were more active than usual, compared to 36% who say they are doing less.

Find out more: <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13267/cr-ld13267%20-e.pdf>