

IFRCS12 Rhiannon Simms, Chairperson, Gowerton Hockey Club

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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Ymateb gan: Rhiannon Simms, Cadeirydd, Gowerton Hockey Club | Evidence from: Rhiannon Simms, Chairperson, Gowerton Hockey Club

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

Reduction in funding has resulted in less support for our volunteer led club. Less staff in hockey wales means we have to try and do more work on our own without expert support and guidance, Also the cost of living crisis has had an impact on the number of people that can pay to attend our club and to buy the equipment needed meaning our fees are going up also as we have less members to cover the costs of running the club. We are lucky that our pitch has been resurfaced but we are the only hockey pitch available for a large distance and have players coming from as far as Llandeilo to get to Swansea to play.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it.

We have had to increase our fee structures just to cover the cost of pitch fees and equipment such as first aid kits etc. We have also had to undertake more fundraising activities to try and cover our running costs. We do not have the money to be able to reimburse people for coaching and so we rely solely on volunteers.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

Many of our volunteers lack specific skills and experience in coaching and supporting a club. We would love to place them on courses but this is costly. We also struggle to get umpires as many are not paid and so simply cannot give their time for free so again we are losing experience and expertise in this capacity. As a women's team we often have to share the pitch as we simply cannot afford the whole pitch fees for training and so often we are taken over by men's football teams that have more embers and so are able to cover the training costs more easily than we are. Cuts to Governing Body or sports development staff have placed additional pressure on volunteers, making it more challenging to attract and retain club members.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Free access to courses and support for those wishing to take part in coaching or officiating. Access to equipment and training or playing kit that can be used by everyone to reduce the kit costs for participants. Access to more facilities at a reasonable price. Promotion of our activities and links to organisations that can guide members to our clubs for health and well being reasons. Physical activity, particularly women's, to be made a priority and emphasized.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

As women we are often left with caring responsibilities and burdens making it difficult for us to train and play which is all made more difficult by pitch closures, lack of transport, lack of expertise and rising club fees. Those who cannot afford equipment or fees are hit the hardest particularly when you cannot get to the facilities on public transport. Those with specific learning needs are not being catered for as adapted equipment and specific expertise is lacking in our club and we have limited funding to change this. Reductions in local authority funding have led to higher facility fees, which increases the cost of participation in the sport. These costs are often passed on to members, creating barriers to entry and widening the inequality gap.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

The growing competition for limited grant funds has made it harder for clubs to secure necessary resources, thereby limiting the scope and availability of sports activities. As we rely purely on volunteers finding time to find and apply for these grants is time consuming and stressful on top of all of the other roles we currently undertake to keep the club going.