

## **IFRCS48 Paul Roberts, Director of Sport & Place, StreetGames**

---

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport](#)

Ymateb gan: Paul Roberts, Cyfarwyddwr Chwaraeon a Lle, StreetGames | Evidence from Paul Roberts, Director of Sport & Place, StreetGames

---

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

#### **Impact on our organisation (StreetGames):**

- We have had to review our staffing structure, which has meant a reduction in some posts and/or reviewing how we use resource for capacity
- There have been challenges in the number of opportunities to grow our support to more Locally Trusted Organisations and young people living in poverty, for sport
- There are fewer opportunities to access grants and funding, from sport, to grow participation opportunities for young people living in poverty.

#### **Wider Sector:**

- We are recognising that wider sports organisations are finding it difficult to fund and prioritise (at the same time) tackling inequalities, alongside governance requirements and other organisation priorities. The demand on them to focus more on tackling inequalities has grown, but the resource to do anything meaningful, long-term or impactful has shrunk.
  - There is less investment across the sector to mobilise young people, living in poverty to access sport.
  - There is growing pressure on leisure operators' running costs. The knock-on effect is increased prices for leisure access. This is presenting a
-

challenge for low-income families, to pay for leisure access. There are also less opportunities for community organisations to hire leisure spaces at a discounted rate, therefore long-standing bookings are no longer financially sustainable for either party.

- We have witnessed a large-scale change in employed professionals/volunteer across the sector. Some leaving for better paid jobs, some leaving because the reduction in funding impacted on their role. Volunteers are leaving because there is far less financial support for them, due to the reduction in funding.

#### **Locally Trusted Organisations tell us that:**

- Their operating costs (building running costs, facility hire, equipment costs and staffing costs) have increased (some have doubled) but there is far less funding available to support these costs.
- With the lack of funding available, this is having an impact on engagement for young people, or the ability to run sports engagement programmes in most of Wales' poorest communities.
- In some communities, we work with locally trusted organisations, who use community facilities to provide sporting opportunities. Many of these facilities have heavily reduced their operating times, some have closed completely. This leaving an opportunity deficit for sport, in many of Wales's poorest communities. From a young person's perspective, this is leaving them with less safe places to go and enjoy sport.

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

We have been focussing our attention to leverage non-sports funding into sport. Ensuring that non-sports funders understand the ways in which sport can deliver against their objectives, across policy areas.

Some examples include:

- Working with trusts and foundations e.g. Waterloo Foundation, to support sporting provision, alongside food poverty, in target communities across Wales. Similarly, we have accessed funding through The Pears Foundation, for similar provisions.
-

- Ardal (SEWCAP Construction Framework and SEWH Highways Framework). Where we have been working with commercial building companies, and the supply chain to help them understand how and where they can invest in sport, to deliver social value and develop community engagement.
- Through a community safety lens, we have leverage investment from the Home Office Ministry of Justice Fund, of which many organisations, in Wales benefitted, where they were able to deliver sporting opportunities/interventions, whilst contributing toward community safety outcomes.
- Building relationships with Housing Associations in North Wales to provide match funding to support sporting provision for their residents in targeted areas.

Our work is ongoing in this area. We recognise that the sporting funds available can only go so far, but we also recognise that, presented and delivered in the right way, sport can deliver positive outcomes for many non-sport funder objectives, across a range of policy areas.

We have also adopted a listening approach to our work with locally trusted organisations (LTOs) and young people living in poverty. By listening to the challenges LTOs face, we can seek to implement the right fundraising support for them. By listening to young people, we can grow our understanding of what they would like to see in their local communities and how this will help them to be more active and engaged in sport.

**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 communities and locally trusted organisations we work with, are already challenged by reversing the consequences of COVID-19: There is noticeably less sporting provision available in communities; facility closures in communities are impacting on sport; facility hour reductions in communities impacts on sport; the sporting participation gap between the poorest and most affluent remains stubborn and is increasing. The current budget reduction for sport is layered on top of existing challenges, that organisations delivering sport in Wales's poorest communities, have been trying to reverse for the past 4 years.
-

- StreetGames recently commissioned a study on the health and wellbeing of young people in low-income areas. The report highlighted the risk of missing out on the 'triple dividend': In-active children today, are more likely to become in-active adults. In turn, in-active adults are less likely to promote active children, in the future. If we allow this to happen, it becomes more difficult to reverse.
- Facility closures, or reduction in facility hours, particularly in the poorest communities, has a detrimental impact on the sporting choices people have in their communities. Our learning suggests that young people, living in low-income underserved communities are not likely to travel more than a mile to access sport. Closure of community venues is likely to result in increased inactivity levels due to lack of opportunity and lack of access, not necessarily lack of motivation or demand.
- Reducing the sporting opportunities for young people on their doorstep will reduce the positive sporting choices they have available to them. It may also change the lens young people, living in the poorest communities, have on sport – they may not see it as something that is for them! In many cases, this leading to future inactivity or a larger sporting gap between the poorest and more affluent young people. Wales could see itself chasing a larger sporting inactivity gap in the future.

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

- Take a more pro-active view and approach to sport as a positive tool for some of the issues facing government, such as health, community safety, youth employment, community engagement etc
  - Play a supportive and advocacy role through their social value work to encourage the private sector to consider sport, more often, as a positive social impact investment for the future e.g. Ardal (SEWSCAP and SEWH frameworks)
  - Re-visit the existing sports budget principles and consider using proportionate universalism – public funding targeted into places where levels of poverty and deprivation are highest
-

- Consider the use of asset-based approaches for sport, which builds on and supports existing assets in local areas (i.e. developing and growing local sports volunteers and the local workforce, creating links to other existing local buildings and/or open spaces that may not be purpose built sports facilities for example community halls, links to local businesses and institutions etc) rather than parachuting resources into an area from elsewhere.
- Explore how the current investment can simply provide core cost support to local organisations delivering sport or sports clubs.

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

As outlined in previous answers, it is clear that budget reductions will and are impacting on lots of different areas for people facing socio-economic disadvantage disproportionately. Those living in the poorest communities are feeling the cuts hardest and are seeing the worst impact on local sport provision reduction and cancellation. These communities are increasingly being left behind in terms of lack of investment and local sporting provision.

The impact on socio-economic disadvantage isn't just because of sporting investment reduction. Young people and their families living in Wales's poorest communities are feeling the on-going cost of living crisis hard, and having to make increasingly hard choices on where and how they spend their money. This coupled with a reduction in free and accessible sporting provision is leading to large reductions in opportunity to participate and participation levels.

Many of the community-based sporting opportunities within low income, underserved communities are not provided by National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), they are provided by Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs). The LTOs are rooted within these communities and, for the reasons stated in earlier questions, are facing their own financial challenges. These organisations are struggling to provide sporting provision in these communities, but there is no back up coming from the wider sector to put rescue packages in place, as there is for some NGB affiliated clubs. Many of these LTOs are not affiliated sporting clubs, they are community organisations, who also provide sporting provision, therefore are not always eligible for the 'sport' funding support.

Welsh Government has invested in previous programmes, such as Communities First, where the value of that investment aimed to promote Healthier

---

Communities. Many Communities First Clusters saw the value in investing in local people to support local sporting opportunities. The investment review and removal of programmes, like this, is felt in the poorest communities most, for a longer period of time.

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

We would welcome a re-consideration of funding for today. Funds such as The Winter of Wellbeing and Summer of Fun were widely welcomed by locally trusted organisations and local sports providers. It gave them an opportunity to maintain, or grow, engagement, at that time. However, when those funding taps are turned off, there is nothing to replace it, leaving organisations who deliver sport facing challenges in their delivery, and limiting the amount of sport provision they can provide in the here and now.

We would also welcome a review of longer-term sustained funding opportunities. Programmes like the Healthy and Active Fund (HAF), allowed organisations to build more resilient programmes, for longer-term change, and replicable models of delivery, to share across Wales. The security of a multi-year funding arrangement enabled longer term thinking, testing and development throughout funding life cycle. This in turn allowed for greater innovation, better engagement by beneficiaries and enabled meaningful consultation and co-production. These are all excellent building blocks for long term sustainable behaviour change, but also ensures long-term accessibility of opportunity.

---