
Sport tackles the mental health and wellbeing crisis

Request for Submissions

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1. Overview

1.1 The Sport for Development Coalition and Mind are collaborating to promote and enhance the contribution sport and physical activity can make to addressing the mental health and wellbeing emergency brought on by COVID-19. To support this objective the two organisations have released a call for submissions of case studies, learning, and evidence on ‘sport and physical activity, COVID-19 and the mental health and wellbeing crisis’ (e.g. outcomes of participatory evaluation, impact reports, research).

1.2 Submissions that address the following areas are requested:

- i. Examples and case studies of good practice on the use of sport and physical activity to support mental health and wellbeing in response to COVID-19 and the recovery from the pandemic.
- ii. Learning and evidence that can inform policy, funding and practice in the mental health sector and health sector more broadly.
- iii. Learning and evidence that can inform policy, funding and practice in the sport and physical activity sector.
- iv. Learning and evidence that can inform policy and practice to enhance the scale and impact of intentional sport and physical activity-based interventions aimed at

supporting mental health and wellbeing outcomes (i.e. sport for development approaches).

- 1.3 Submissions received will inform a discussion paper, policy brief and guidelines that set out clear evidence-based recommendations for future policy and practice to protect and enhance the contribution of sport and physical activity to mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 1.4 The intention is for these submissions to include, but extend beyond, presenting previous case studies, evidence and research, and learning, on sport physical activity and mental health. It is envisaged submissions will examine responses to the pandemic and consider the medium to long term implications of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and mental health and wellbeing across both the mental health and sport and physical activity sectors.
- 1.5 Submissions that consider the inequitable impact of the pandemic across different communities and groups are especially welcome, with a particular focus on age, ethnicity, disability and long-term health conditions, geography, and economic status.
- 1.6 The audience for the paper and policy brief extends beyond the sport and physical activity sector with a particular focus on policy makers, commissioning groups and civil society actors across the health and social care, voluntary and community sectors.
- 1.7 The following types of submissions are requested, with both previously published and new submissions welcomed:
 - Case studies
 - Published monitoring data and survey findings
 - Evaluation reports
 - Discussion papers
 - Published research (peer reviewed and grey literature)

New submissions are requested to be limited to 2500 words.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 COVID-19 has had a profound and far-reaching impact on the country. The health emergency, wellbeing crisis and economic shock brought on by the virus and associated lockdowns have created the most serious societal challenge for generations and exacerbated many deep-rooted inequalities. The substantial death toll and infection rate, economic impact and wide-ranging social impacts underscore the scope of this challenge.
- 2.2 The impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing across the UK has been substantial. More than half of adults and over two thirds of young people surveyed by Mind during lockdown periods have reported that their mental health has gotten worse.¹ While more than 1 in 4 young people have said they are unable said they had felt unable to cope with life since the start of the pandemic.²

- 2.3 Sport and physical activity participation is not a panacea for this crisis, but there is evidence that being active and involved in linked programmatic interventions and social networks can help to improve mental health, support wellbeing and resilience, and help to tackle social isolation.³
- 2.4 There are also a range of sport organisations, charities and community groups who have intentionality deployed sport and physical activity-based methodology as a central component of interventions aimed at delivering positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes for participants. These approaches, broadly described as ‘sport for development’ have reported positive outcomes.⁴
- 2.5 As with most areas of society, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on activity levels across the country. The proportion of the population who met activity guidelines dropped by 7.1% during the first lockdown period representing just over 3 million fewer active adults.⁵ The proportion of children and young people that they were active the summer term) fell by 2.3%.⁶ Many existing inequalities in participation levels have also been accentuated during the pandemic.
- 2.6 Community sport and sport for development has also been affected. Much of the sector has been restricted or shuttered as part of measures to limit the spread of the virus. As a result, many organisations and interventions using sport and physical activity based methodology to support mental health and well-being have been paused or have pivoted to online or hybrid delivery.⁷
- 2.7 Given the association between physical activity and wellbeing, and the results delivered through sport-based interventions being utilised to support mental health outcomes, the wider impact of these reductions in activity and programmatic restrictions are likely to be considerable. Moreover, it is evident that new or adapted policy approaches, spending measures and capacity building will be required to ensure the positive contribution sport and physical can make to mental health and wellbeing is fully realised through the country’s emergence from lockdown and during rebuilding and reinvigoration process.

3. Objectives and Focus

- 3.1 In this context, the Sport for Development Coalition (‘the Coalition’) and Mind are collaborating to better understand how to protect and enhance the contribution sport and physical activity can make to addressing the mental health and wellbeing emergency brought on by COVID-19.
- 3.2 To support this objective the two organisations are requesting submissions to inform a discussion paper and policy brief titled:

‘Sport and physical activity, COVID-19 and the mental health and wellbeing crisis’.

- 3.3 The primary focus of the paper is to set out clear evidence-based recommendations for future policy and practice to protect and enhance the contribution of sport and physical activity to mental health and wellbeing outcomes. These recommendations will be based on an analysis of the potential implications for mental health and wellbeing of reduced physical activity levels, the impact of current and future adaptations to sport- and physical activity- based interventions in a post-Covid landscape and be situated in the context of the wider response of the mental health sector to the current crisis.
- 3.4 The intention is for these submissions to include, but extend beyond, presenting previous case studies, research, evidence and learning on sport, physical activity and mental health. The submissions will help inform recommendations for future policy, commissioning approaches, spending measures and programme methodology.
- 3.5 Submissions that consider the inequitable impact of the pandemic across different communities and groups are especially welcome, with a particular focus on differences based on age, ethnicity, disability, geography and economic status.
- 3.6 Submissions that take a balanced view on the role sport and physical activity can play are especially encouraged. It is envisaged the paper, brief and guidelines will clearly set out that sport and physical activity should be part of a toolkit of support for mental health including medication, talking therapies and wider lifestyle changes. The outputs will not present sport and physical activity as a ‘panacea’ or ‘miracle cure’ when we know there are a complex range of barriers and inequalities that need to be addressed.
- 3.7 The audience for the paper extends beyond the sport and physical activity sector with a particular focus on policy makers in government at all levels, commissioning groups and civil society actors across the health and social care, voluntary and community sectors.
- 3.8 Submissions that address the following areas are requested:
- i. Examples and case studies of good practice on the use of sport and physical activity to support mental health and wellbeing in response to COVID-19 and the recovery from the pandemic.
 - ii. Learning and evidence (e.g. outcomes of participatory evaluation, impact reports, research) that can inform policy, funding and practice in the mental health sector and health sector more broadly.
 - iii. Learning and evidence (e.g. outcomes of participatory evaluation, impact reports, research) that can inform policy, funding and practice in the sport and physical activity sector.
 - iv. Learning and evidence (e.g. outcomes of participatory evaluation, impact reports, research) that can inform policy and practice to enhance the scale and impact of

intentional sport and physical activity-based interventions aimed at supporting mental health and wellbeing outcomes (i.e. sport for development approaches).

4. Timelines

4.1 Submission are requested by 30 April 2021.

5. Submissions, questions and further information

5.1 Please make submissions or address questions and requests for further information to the Sport for Development Coalition at: coalition@sportfordevelopmentcoalition.org

6. Overview of the Sport for Development Coalition and MIND

Sport for Development Coalition

6.1 The [Sport for Development Coalition](#) is a network of more than 160 organisations that use sport and physical activity to generate positive social outcomes. The Coalition mobilises collective action to measure the impact of sport for development at scale, support the creation of an enabling policy environment and unlock investment and resources to help realise the potential of community sport and physical activity to contribute to positive social change.

6.2 The Coalition is made up of a diverse group of organisations that include sporting bodies, community organisations, social enterprises, charities, and aligned sector networks and support organisations. The Coalition is supported by Sport England, Comic Relief and Laureus Sport for Good.

6.3 Following the announcement of the third national lockdown the Coalition launched a new initiative entitled '[Adapt, Support, Respond](#)' which aims to understand how community sport and sport for development organisations have adapted their services to continue to support individuals and communities at this time, and how they can best play their part in the nation's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This request for proposals is part of this initiative.

Mind

6.4 Mind is the mental health charity for England and Wales. Mind stand shoulder to shoulder with people with mental health problems to provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. Mind is a federated network of around 120 local Mind, last year the network supported 396,000 people across England and Wales.

6.5 Since 2014 Mind have been supporting the sport and physical activity sector to better understand mental health through a strategic partnership with Sport England, supporting

thousands of people to use physical activity to help them to stay well and live well with mental health problems and as a platform to raise awareness of mental health, tackling mental health stigma. This includes:

- The [Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation](#) with the Sport and Recreation Alliance and Professional Players Federation, which has 450 signatories since launching in 2015.
- [Get Set to Go](#) a peer support programme using physical activity to support people with existing mental health problems. The programme has been led by 27 local Minds in partnership with sport sector partners and has been independently evaluated by Loughborough University.
- The [Sector Support and Influencing programme](#) which includes universal support including training and resources, along with operational and strategic partnerships.
- Delivered partnerships using sport as a vehicle to achieve mental health outcomes with the [English Football League \(EFL\)](#), ASICS and other corporate partners.

Notes

¹ Mind (2020) *The mental health emergency: how has the coronavirus pandemic impacted our mental health?* London: Mind. Available at: mind.org.uk

² Princes Trust (2021) *The Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021*. London: Princes Trust. Available at: <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/tesco-youth-index-2021>

³ Peirce, N., Lester, C., Seth, A., and Turner, P. (2018). The Role of Physical Activity and Sport in Mental Health, Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine UK Joint Position Statement with the Sports and Exercise Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. https://www.fsem.ac.uk/position_statement/the-role-of-physical-activity-and-sport-in-mental-health;

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⁴ See for example: Get Set to Go Research Consortium (2017) *Get Set to Go: Research findings*. London: Mind. Available at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4785/get-set-to-go-research-summary-report.pdf>. Dame Kelly Holmes Trust (2020)

Impact Report 2019/20. Available at: <https://www.damekellyholmestrust.org/our-impact>, Sport in Mind (n.d.) *The Difference we make*. Available at: <https://www.sportinmind.org/the-difference-we-make>

⁵ Sport England. (2020). *Active Lives Adults Survey: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Report*. https://sportengland-productionfiles.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb_VxZcWHcfFX0_wRaI7

⁶ Sport England. (2021). *Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Coronavirus (COVID-19) Report Mid-May to late-July 2020 (the summer term)*, Published January 2021. https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUxK.qegt1GQdOmLiQcgThJ

⁷ Sport for Development Coalition (2021) *Adapt, Support, Respond: Evidencing sport for development's role in recovery*. Available at: <https://sportfordevelopmentcoalition.org/article/adapt-support-respond-evidencing-sport-developments-role-recovery>; Sported (2020) *Impact of COVID-19 on members*. Available at: <https://sported.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Covid-19-challenges-needs-solutions-feedback-to-Sported-Dec.pdf>