

SHARING OF INSIGHT

Context: This has been a time of complete disruption within our sector. The work of all those contacted has been affected in some way. At the very least because they have moved to working from home, but for many it has meant a more dramatic change.

Very crudely, we can place contacts into three groups. Firstly, those who have been directed to new roles and responsibilities primarily to support the COVID-19 response. These are mainly local government or associate workers. Secondly, those operating in the community who have closed the doors on their facility-based services (cafes, hubs, physical activity providers) and have proactively turned to offer support to their community via shopping, delivering meals, telephone befriending, online classes etc. These are mainly VCS workers and more than likely are driven by individual motivations. As a result, some are extremely proactive, responsive and creative, others more anxious and cautious over financial concerns and longer term impact. And thirdly, those who have mothballed their operations for the foreseeable future. These are mainly NGBs and traditional sports clubs.

Everything feels very short term and reactive at the moment, described by one person as being 'in critical care mode'. There are examples of the workforce feeling very stretched. Many are finding that their personal and family circumstances are impacting on their ability to perform their role and on their wellbeing. Some are having to consider alternative ways to bring income into the family.

System change appears to be happening organically. Barriers have been broken down at record speed and greater connectivity is evident at many levels. Where this is not the case, there is frustration at the lack of joined up working with residents receiving mixed messages and contact from multiple organisations, probably driven by a lack of understanding of each other's work.

Impact of COVID-19 on increasing levels of physical activity

We're in a unique period. One that has brought both opportunities and challenges in the context of physical activity. We have been listening closely to a wide range of partners to explore and understand different perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on the work to reduce inactivity and increase physical activity. Below is a synopsis of what we have heard. It captures and summarises what we have noticed from these conversations and we're keen to hear more and broaden perspectives. **So we are sharing this to**

continue the conversation. Does this ring true with your experience?

What are you noticing? What should the collective response be?

> Shared purpose

COVID-19 has created an undeniable shared purpose - it has mobilised people across the system and within communities to come together to help each other deal with the crisis. We are hearing of greater collaboration and wider connectivity developing at speed. In many cases this renewed purpose has enabled organisations to work together in a way that would previously have been deemed too difficult. In some areas this is enabling by crossing geographical and organisational boundaries. In others, the practice is more controlling between organisations and residents.

How do we foster these behaviours and ways of working for the benefit of physical activity?

How do we maintain new ways of interacting and connecting in a way that empowers rather than controls?

> Community show of resilience

The flexibility and agility of communities to mobilise quickly and form new relationships has played a significant role in responding to COVID-19, although there are differences between communities. Across the board, the volunteer effort has been immense, including in some of most vulnerable communities. This demonstrates what's possible.

How can we harness this strength and create a future that recognises and works with the creativity and resilience from within our own community?

> Inequalities

Some people are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The evidence is that the virus has had a greater impact on some of our more vulnerable communities and we are hearing that this, in turn, is having an impact on physical activity behaviour. We need a greater understanding of this and then we must continue to prioritise and focus our work where the inequalities are greatest.

How do we work together to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable communities and its effect on physical activity behaviour?



Context:

Financial worries abound, particularly for those with fixed overheads to manage. But also for those who have had to stop planned income generation activities. For those who rely on membership income, there is a very real worry about who will return and in what numbers. This applies to volunteers as well as players. This is probably the area of most immediate need and where contacts are looking for support in identifying funds and writing applications.

There is immense concern for the more vulnerable people in communities, with much talk about the need for food. Incomes have been affected by reduced work hours or no work at all. Some families are finding it difficult to manage having everyone at home and there are mentions of children and young people regularly leaving the house, either because they've been told to get out or because no-one cares what they do. There are concerns also for how anyone without access to technology is coping as the world has shifted dramatically online. The mental wellbeing of young people, particularly those already with mental health issues is a worry and there have been a couple of requests for help with mental health first aid training.

The impact on physical activity behaviour is unclear at this stage. Interestingly, the majority of contacts described how important it was for them personally and how much they were enjoying their exercise time. And yet this does not always seem to have transitioned into their work with others. There are calls from some partners for physical activity messaging with a feeling that now is the opportune time.

At a community level there is a feeling that people are focused on the basics such as food and medicine. During the initial stages, there was not the headspace to think about being active right now. There are also concerns that people with longstanding health conditions are unlikely to be active due to not going out and a possible lack of technology.

> Physical activity

Being active can help COVID-19 recovery and save lives. The directive by Government to exercise (as a reason to leave the house) has meant the importance of being active has never been so prominent as in this COVID-19 period. We are hearing that conversations about the importance of being active are taking place in many more contexts.

What do we need to do to build this prominence?

> Financial uncertainty

Within the system, the delicate nature of the financial situation is unclear yet we are hearing there will be an impact that we will have to work through. Physical activity and sport will not be immune to this.

How do we use our evidence to understand and inform decision making as part of the recovery process?

> Leadership

New leaders are emerging from different and unexpected places. This has contributed to greater innovation and collaborative action. In a way that meets their needs, we need to support and enable these leaders to continue their work.

How can we harness and develop these leadership behaviours within communities and organisations across the system?

> Workforce

Very few people have been unaffected by COVID-19 in their work. Those working in physical activity and sport have seen a significant impact. There has been a variance in how people are responding and managing the situations they find themselves in. Some are finding it easier to adapt, connect and innovate than others. There is no blueprint for what will happen next.

What support is required to enable the workforce to adapt to the continually changing circumstances.



One in four respondents in Derbyshire and **one third** in Notts are now doing a **lot less** physical activity than they were pre-COVID. **Many of these are living in vulnerable communities, where inequalities are widening**



66% of respondents in Derbyshire and **70%** in Notts say they are **more aware** of the importance of physical activity



70% of respondents said they have found new ways to be physically active and **59%** have found new exercise habits that they intend to continue once restrictions are eased

Three-quarters of respondents have said that **they miss the activities** they did pre-COVID, with many looking forward to getting back to old routines that enable those activities to happen



Barriers to continuing physical activity after restrictions are lifted



"Have to go back to work shifts, family commitments and being mum's taxi to teenagers"



"I am considered extremely vulnerable and don't anticipate leaving the house until at least August"



"Returning to normal life will impact me and my family's ability to continue with physical activity. We motivate each other, so if one of us returns to normal the whole chain will break"