

THE RUGBY LEAGUE DIVIDEND



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
IMPACT OF RUGBY LEAGUE



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

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Dr Nicolas Scelles
Manchester Metropolitan University
T: 0161 247 3949
E: N.Scelles@mmu.ac.uk



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AUTHORS AND OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO THE RESEARCH

AUTHORS



DR NICOLAS SCELLES
(Principal Investigator)



PROF JONATHAN GRIX



PROF MARC JONES



DR THOMAS HOSTLER

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO THE RESEARCH

GABRIELLE SALOMON
(all PhD candidates at MMU)

LUCI SMITH

DANIEL GALLANT



The annual economic impact of the English clubs and central events is estimated at more than

£141 MILLION

Community clubs have economic importance for their territory, maintaining economic relationships with local companies and providing employment and remuneration.

The social impact of the sport of Rugby League on players and volunteers is estimated at more than

£185 MILLION

Every £ spent by Rugby League community clubs in sport generates a social return of £4.08.

£1 = £4.08

The social capital of the sport of Rugby League is demonstrated by the positive elements highlighted by volunteers as well as members of the communities who do not identify as fans of Rugby League in terms of social cohesiveness, identity, aspiration and role models.

FOREWORD

Shaun Wane is the England Head Coach and a former player and highly successful coach of Super League club Wigan Warriors.

Speaking on a BBC podcast in May 2019, he describes the route out of trouble that the sport provided.

He had a 'bad start' to his childhood, including being arrested as a teenager. 'A bad start, no question. But great finish.' "I was brought up in a council estate in Wigan called Worsley Hall. It's quite different, it's quite tough," Wane says in the podcast.

"It's a fantastic estate, but you need to be tough, you need to be switched on, you can't let people take advantage of you." "When I was 15, I did something really bad. I rang in a bomb scare. It was stupid and I got caught and arrested. I went home and my dad nearly killed me. I thought 'I'm going to die here, so I need to get out'. "I went out, I left my house, I had a ripped t-shirt and no shoes on, and I never went back. I had nowhere to go."

"I ended up going to Lorraine's house (his then girlfriend) - her mum and dad put me up. And now we're married with two kids and a grandkid," says Wane.

"I signed for Wigan when I was 16, made my debut when I was 17 and we bought our own house when I was 19.

"I'm only telling you 10% of what it was like. But the things that happened to me when I was a kid made me a good dad. I have a great relationship with my two daughters, and I see my grandson every day. So everything's good. It was meant to be."

Shaun Wane now combines professional sport coaching with motivational speaking to business leaders in diverse sectors. He cites a love of travel and meeting different people and instilling in them the values he developed as Head Coach at Wigan Warriors.

SHAUN WANE,
ENGLAND HEAD COACH





FOREWORD

Sport has a very special place in the social fabric of our nation. It has the power to engage us as individuals and groups, bringing us together and enriching our communities through playing, volunteering, watching and supporting. The UK excels at sport. Our teams and athletes are outstanding and the UK is and will remain one of the best places in the world to host major sporting events. Sport offers the nation's favourite form of volunteering. It shapes all our communities and touches our daily lives. It contributes to our wellbeing, our senses of place, of belonging and of happiness.

Government and Sport England have worked in partnership with sport and physical activity organisations to take a bold approach to harnessing the potential of sport for social good. The funding for sport is no longer merely about how many people take part, but rather how sport can have a meaningful and measurable impact on improving people's lives.

National sporting organisations have been challenged to better evidence and demonstrate the wider social impacts that sport has on mental and physical health, community cohesion and addressing inequalities.

I am delighted that, on behalf of the sport, the Rugby Football League has embarked on a series of independent research and insight activities, to demonstrate in particular the social impact of Rugby League. This 'Rugby League Dividend' report is the first in the series.

In committing to this, the Rugby Football League is bringing to a far wider audience the story of how this authentic sport delivers a huge range of social and economic benefits – the 'Rugby League dividend' – in its core communities in the North and beyond.

This report highlights the central and varied role that Rugby League clubs and





charitable foundations play at the heart of their communities in providing vital social hubs and outreach activities which extend far beyond the provision of regular sporting opportunities for children, young people, women and men; and the considerable value of those services and activities.

The return on investment in Rugby League is a significant social return which can be measured and which makes a positive difference to people's lives. I am particularly pleased to see the contribution that Rugby League makes to social mobility brought to the fore in this report.

The nation is looking forward to the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 and the enormous opportunity to bring rugby league and its story to the widest possible audience with the Women's, Men's and Wheelchair RL World Cups integrated into one inclusive, exciting

tournament played in iconic venues in the North and across the country.

I will continue to play my part in celebrating Rugby League, its clubs, foundations and communities; and I wish all three England teams every success in their preparations for RLWC2021.

ANDY BURNHAM,
*MAYOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER
AND RFL PRESIDENT 2018-2019*







FOREWORD

Manchester Metropolitan University is delighted to present this report describing the economic and social impact of Rugby League. The report was produced for the Rugby Football League by academics in our Sport Policy Unit, which is part of the world-leading Future Economies Research Centre within our Faculty of Business and Law. It is an important report and evidences the significant contribution that the sport of Rugby League makes to communities and the nation beyond sport. As the report describes, in addition to its economic impact, Rugby League successfully capitalises on its ability to reach core disadvantaged communities, contributing positively to social cohesiveness, the identity of the town/city, aspiration and provides positive role models. The sport provides an important support to social mobility and has a reach, visibility and value beyond its core followers.

I am sure that the report will enhance Manchester Metropolitan University's reputation as a leader in Sport Policy research and we are pleased to continue our association with the sport following the announcement of Manchester Metropolitan University as the Official University Partner of the Rugby League World Cup 2021. This significant new partnership will enable us to conduct research into the impact of the World Cup, that we hope will inform the organization of major international sporting events more generally, and it will provide a range of exciting opportunities for students from across the university.

**PROFESSOR RICHARD GREENE, BSC,
PHD, MB, BS, MBA, FHEA, FAS**
*PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY
PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE
EXCHANGE
MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY*





INTRODUCTION

The present report tackles the economic and social impact and importance of the sport of Rugby League (professional and grassroots) in England. It responds to a request from the Rugby Football League to undertake a robust research project to investigate and highlight the significant contribution that Rugby League makes to communities and the nation beyond sport, e.g. economic impact, physical and mental health and increasing aspiration. Such research is timely in a context where the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee has recently produced a report on the social impact of sport (DCMSC, 2019). The output expected by the Rugby Football League is split into 5 outcomes:

- To quantify the economic impact of the sport.
- To quantify the economic importance of the sport.
- To quantify the social impact of the sport.
- To evidence that every £ spent on the sport generates a social return of £x.
- To grasp the meaning of a club to its community and the impact it has on social cohesion in that community (social capital).

Economic impact assessment is a well-researched area in sports economics, generally used in assessing the pros and cons of hosting sports-mega events (Barget





& Gouguet, 2010). Interestingly, Barget and Gouguet (2010) note that such an economic impact assessment alone is not enough to justify expenditure on such events, but rather there is a need for a cost-benefit analysis in order to measure the net social utility for the population. In other words, costs and benefits are not only monetary (economic) but also non-monetary (social). While Barget and Gouguet (2010) conducted an economic impact and social utility assessment of the Rugby World Cup 2007 in the different French territories (regions) that hosted games, their application is relevant for the research brief put out by the Rugby Football League. Indeed, a main objective is to produce an overall economic and social impact report for the sport of Rugby League in England. CDES (Centre for Sport Law and Economics), based in Limoges (France), has already adapted and applied the methodology described above to assess the economic and social impact of the French professional football club AC Ajaccio (CDES, 2017). Dr Nicolas Scelles, a sports economist in the MMU research team, has already worked with the author of the CDES project (see Scelles & Gouguet, 2015).

In this research, we complemented this approach by adding an extra qualitative research dimension to drill down into the four case studies provided by RFL to analyse the impact of the sport of Rugby League on social capital generation and community spirit. Profs Grix and Jones took responsibility for this part of the study, supported by Dr Hostler, based on their previous publications on both 'social capital' (Grix, 2001), 'social capital and sport' (Grix, 2016) and the 'feelgood factor' (Jones et al., 2012). The research assistants Gabrielle Salomon, Luci Smith and Daniel Gallant – all doctoral candidates at MMU - conducted the focus groups and interviews required for the qualitative section of this report.

The report is structured as follows. First, the methodology is described. Second, the results are provided for the economic impact and importance as well as the social impact, return on investment and capital. Last, a conclusion sums up the findings.



METHODOLOGY

This research relies on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative part aims to assess the economic and social impact of the sport of Rugby League, while the qualitative part focuses on social capital.

For the quantitative part, the social impact of the sport of Rugby League could be evaluated based on the data provided by the Rugby Football League. Nevertheless, for a full assessment of the economic impact, the availability of economic data for all clubs would have been required, which was not possible. In its Dividend Research Brief, the Rugby Football League suggested extrapolating findings based on two professional clubs and two community clubs. Although extrapolation has some limitations, it appeared to be the most realistic approach given the timescales. Our suggestion was to apply, adapt and improve the methodology used by Barget and Gouquet (2010) and CDES (2017) to four clubs. For this research, it has been agreed with the Rugby Football League to focus on two professional clubs (Hull FC and Warrington Wolves) and five community clubs (West Hull and Wibsey Warriors for the qualitative part, Salford City Roosters, Wath Brow Hornets and Wigan St Judes for the quantitative part). Given the timescales and the time

needed to organise the data and then to calculate the economic and social impact of the sport of Rugby League, the MMU research team could not realistically conduct the full data collection. This was not identified as a potential issue since the in-house Rugby Football League data and insight team collates and provided a number of key socio-economic data on club postcode areas and detailed 'Pen portraits' of key clubs and their surrounding community. Among them, some data were identified as particularly relevant to the research project, e.g. participation, employment and volunteering levels as well as community cohesion measurements.

It is worth noting that beyond the assessment of the economic impact of the clubs, an assessment of their economic importance was also conducted, see below for the rationale.

In order to explore how the sport of Rugby League impacts the local community in terms of social capital generation and the associations local people have with the team, we proposed a series of focus groups (one in each research site; n=4) with volunteers at the Rugby League club. To get a broader perspective of the impact of the Rugby League we interviewed members of the community in each location who did not identify



as fans of Rugby League (n=12). All interview transcripts were transcribed professionally and underwent a thematic analysis to draw out themes with which to answer research questions on the link between the club's presence in the community and citizens' links with it.

Economic Impact

The economic impact of a sports club is considered by CDES (2017) as the increase in value added in the hosting territory. A key assumption in the evaluation of the economic impact of a sports club is that the money spent by local agents for this club would have been spent for something else if the club would not have existed. As such, the evaluation of its economic impact requires the identification of the money entering and spent in the territory by the club and people taking part in or attending games. Data needed for such a calculation are total revenue and expenditure of the sports club, their geographical origin and destination, expenditure by and geographical origin of home and away fans as well as away teams.

Based on the elements above, the key aspect in the calculation of the economic impact is the distinction between income and endowments coming from the territory (local) and outside the territory (national / international) before determining the expenditure made by a club from the money coming from outside the territory. Then, a multiplier adapted to specific sports organisations is applied (1.7386 for commercial ones, 2.2637 for not-profit ones; Office for National Statistics, 2019). The rationale for this multiplier is twofold: 1) supply chain effects due to the increase in demand from the direct economic impact that

generates an increase in demand on domestic suppliers – indirect effect – and 2) effects of wages earned in the direct and indirect supply chain used to buy goods and services in the economy – induced effect (CDES, 2017; Scottish Government, 2015). Since the Rugby Football League also organises central events, it is necessary to add their economic impact in the calculations.

Economic Importance

Contrary to the evaluation of the economic impact of a sports club, that of its economic importance focuses on all income and expenditure, as well as employment by this club. In other words, the focus is not on whether the sports club makes an impact in the economy (compared to an activity that would generate only local income and expenditure), but instead on how much it represents in economic terms (without considering whether the money comes from inside / outside the territory and is spent inside / outside this territory). It is a relevant complement to the economic impact assessment as the latter can be misleading due to the conservative approach recommended by experts when conducting it. Indeed, it is recommended not to take into account any spending made by local agents, unless identified as coming from outside the territory, i.e. a local agent earning money from outside the territory and spending it inside. However, for a local agent earning money from inside the territory and spending it in the sports club, how to know whether she / he would not have spent this money outside the territory if the club would not have existed (e.g. in another sports club outside the territory)?



Social Impact

Our initial intention was to assess the social utility of the clubs under investigation, i.e. their important social role in their hosting territory in terms of social linkages and cohesion (CDES, 2017). Nevertheless, the data provided did not enable a robust and confident evaluation, only some evidence of activities leading to social utility (see Appendices). Instead, the evaluation of the social impact of the sport of Rugby League in England was conducted. This was possible based on the data provided by the Rugby Football League and a methodology (explained in the results section) already applied for sport in England in a study partially funded by Sport England and aligning with their recognised social outcomes (Davies, Taylor, Ramchandani & Christy, 2016, 2019).

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Based on the calculation of the social impact of the sport of Rugby League in England, it is possible to calculate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) if all funders and their inputs can be identified by simply dividing the social impact (outputs) by all inputs leading to it. In this research, it was not possible to identify all funders and their inputs. However, it was possible to extrapolate the expenses made by community clubs for the sport part (as opposed to the non-sport part such as bar purchases, TV subscriptions & licence, etc.). More details are provided in the results section.

Social Capital

Building out from the qualitative work discussed above, we assume that a Rugby League team located in a community is associated with a range of positive emotional, pro-social behaviours and wellbeing outcomes. We explored these potential relationships in this evaluation. Identifying with, and being a fan of a team, can provide many benefits, such as enhanced social connections, and can contribute positively to well-being (Wann, 2006). Not only does being a fan provide a sense of belonging but says something about 'who we are'. Identifying with a team provides people with part of their social identity, with a strong social identity being positively associated with health outcomes (Haslam, et al 2009) and positive pro-social behaviours particularly when, like a fan, people are motivationally invested in a group and choose to identify with it (e.g., Hackel et al., 2017). We explored these associations in a series of focus groups and interviews with volunteers and members of the communities who do not identify as fans of Rugby League.









RESULTS



Hull FC

The territory considered for Hull FC is East Yorkshire. As such, the economic impact of the club comes from money from outside East Yorkshire entering the territory then spent inside. For the professional part, the economic impact has been evaluated at around £6.2m. For the foundation part, Table 1 presents the calculation of the economic impact of Hull FC Foundation in 2017. Due to the lack of evidence for donations and fundraising events (except for Arco, a local company), they are assumed as local income (conservative measure). For income and endowments, the amount identified as coming from outside the territory is £202,858. It is then necessary to identify the expenditure made thanks to this money. It is not possible to be sure about this, e.g. is all expenditure for raising funds based on money from outside the territory? It is assumed that the full income and endowments coming from outside the territory has been spent, with the distribution between raising funds and education and training corresponding to their respective percentages in the overall expenditure. Last, the gross value added multiplier adapted to not-profit sports organisations is applied, leading to an economic impact of £459,209.

ECONOMIC IMPACT





Table 1 Economic impact of Hull FC Foundation in 2017

	Overall	Entering and spent in territory	Local vs. national
Income and endowments			
Donations and legacies			
Donations	1278	0	Local
Lottery grant	29909	29909	National
Comic Relief	44970	44970	National
Awards for All	0	0	
Hull CCG	28000	0	Local
British Legion	16600	16600	National
Henry Smith	30400	30400	National
Other trading activities			
Fundraising events	119781	0	Local (e.g. Arco)
Funded programmes	80979	80979	National (Sky, Sport England)
Total income & endowments	351917	202858	
Expenditure			
Raising funds	25425	14769	
Education and training	323808	188089	
Total expenditure	349233	202858	
Gross value added multiplier		2.2637	
Economic impact		459209	



Warrington Wolves

The territory considered for Warrington Wolves is Warrington. As such, the economic impact of the club comes from money from outside Warrington entering the territory then spent inside. For the professional part, as for Hull FC, the economic impact has been evaluated at around £6.2m. For the foundation part, Table 2 presents the calculation of the economic impact of Warrington Wolves Foundation in 2017-2018. Due to the lack of evidence for almost all income and endowments (except grants), they are assumed as local income (conservative measure). For income and endowments, the amount identified as coming from outside the territory is £231,317. It is then necessary to identify the expenditure made thanks to this money. As for Hull FC Foundation, it is not possible to be sure about this so it is assumed that the full income and endowments coming from outside the territory has been spent, with the distribution between the different costs corresponding to their respective percentages in the overall expenditure. Last, the gross value added multiplier adapted to sport is applied, leading to an economic impact of £523,632.



Table 2 Economic impact of Warrington Wolves Foundation in 2017-2018

	Overall	Entering and spent in territory	Local vs. national
Income and endowments			
Donations and legacies			
Donations	53729	0	Local
Sponsorship	917	0	Local
Other trading activities			
Room hire	15868	0	Local
Fundraising events	54410	0	Local
Coaching and activities	95008	0	Local
Service charges	25500	0	Local
Contribution to kit and equipment	3839	0	Local
Investment income			
Deposit account interest	0	0	
Income from charitable activities			
Grants	270439	231317	National except £39,122 from Warrington Borough Council Sports Tender
Total income and endowments	519710	231317	
Expenditure			
Raising funds			
Bad debts	700	311	
Refreshments	2726	1212	
Fundraising expenses	47352	21060	
Charitable activities costs			
Charitable activities	469330	208734	
Total expenditure	520108	231317	
Gross value added multiplier		2.2637	
Economic impact		523632	

Synthesis for professional clubs

The economic impact of the professional part in the two professional clubs is around £6.2m each. The economic impact of their foundations is around £500,000 – £459,209 for Hull FC and £523,632 for Warrington Wolves. The amount is lower for Hull FC despite East Yorkshire being more populated than Warrington (598,700 vs. 209,700 in 2017). However, Warrington Wolves is the only Super League club in Warrington while Hull FC is in competition with Hull Kingston Rovers in Hull. Besides, Rugby League is Warrington's premier sport while sports in Hull include not only Rugby League but also football, among others. Eventually, the economic impact of the two professional clubs (professional + foundation) is around £6.7m each.

Extrapolation for professional clubs

There are 34 English professional clubs: 11 in Super League (the 12th club Catalans Dragons being French), 12 in Championship (the 13th and 14th clubs being non-English with Toronto Wolfpack being Canadian and Toulouse Olympique being French) and 11 in League 1. The economic impact of the professional part in the English professional clubs is extrapolated at around £71m. The economic impact of their foundations is extrapolated at around £10.5m. Eventually, the economic impact of the English professional clubs (professional + foundation) is extrapolated at around £81.5m.

Community clubs

The financial information provided for the community clubs did not enable the identification of the money from outside the territory for both clubs. It is likely that the income generated by the clubs mainly comes from the territory, meaning a limited economic impact. This would not be surprising for community clubs that are not expected to bring money from outside the territory. This does not mean that the clubs have no economic importance for their territories as developed below. Besides, although the financial information provided did not enable the assessment of the economic impact of the community clubs and its extrapolation, there will be such an economic impact of the community clubs from the investment committed by HM Government of up to £10m into grassroots Rugby League infrastructure to support the legacy of the Rugby League World Cup England 2021 and efforts participation in the sport (Rugby League World Cup 2021, 2018). This investment enables to estimate the economic impact of community clubs to £22,637,000.

Central Events

Beyond the economic impact of the clubs, it is necessary to assess the one of central events. Four central events are organised by the Rugby Football League and Super League Europe: the Magic Weekend, the Super League Grand Final, the Challenge Cup Final and the four Nations. The latter is an international tournament. There is an international series most years. For the purpose of



this study, we use the 2016 four Nations. In their economic impact and social benefit evaluation of the Magic Weekend 2018 that took place at St. James' Park in Newcastle, Futures Sport (2018) evaluated the direct economic impact to £7,650,293 and the gross value added (corresponding to the full economic impact) to £13,311,509. In their evaluation of the economic impact of Wembley Stadium for the 2017/18 event season, Deloitte (2018) evaluated the direct economic impact of the Challenge Cup Final to £5.2m and a multiplier for events organised in London equal to 1.3375, leading to a full economic impact of £6,955,205. For the Super League Grand Final, there is no existing economic impact evaluation. The format is similar to the Challenge Cup Final (single game, with the possibility for away fans to travel twice the same day so no need for accommodation) and attendance figures are more or less the same, around 70,000 attendees. By taking into account the cost of living index in the cities

(assumed to apply to the expenditure made by primary visitors: 77.63 for Manchester and 89.55 for London; ABC Finance Limited, 2018) and applying a multiplier of 1.7386, the economic impact of the Super League Grand Final is estimated at £7,837,126. The direct economic impact of the four Nations was estimated at £5.2m across six cities by Nielsen Sports (2017). By applying the multiplier of 1.7386, the increase in value added equals £9,040,508. Eventually, the economic impact of the four events equals £37,133,326.

Synthesis

The economic impact of the English clubs and Rugby Football League and Super League Europe central events is estimated at more than £141m. This estimation does not include cup games other than central events and the women's game.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Professional clubs



Hull FC

The club having a 'Total exemption full accounts' for its professional part, it was not possible to assess its economic importance. For the foundation part, income as well as expenditure were around £350,000 while there were 13 employees in 2017.



Warrington Wolves

For the professional part, the abbreviated statement of income was not available for 2017. However, the moves from small to medium and medium to small company over the recent period are consistent with a turnover of more or less £6.5m. This provides the first information relevant to the economic importance of the club for its professional part. The other information for the latter is about employment, with 128 employees in 2017 (similar to 2017) for an aggregate remuneration (wages and salaries, social security costs and pension costs) of £4,7m. Similar pieces of information can be retrieved for the foundation part, with income as well as expenditure being around £520,000 while there were 13 employees for an aggregate remuneration of around £305,000 in 2018. Overall (professional + foundation), Warrington Wolves had income / expenditure of around £7m and 141 employees for an aggregate remuneration of around £5m.

Synthesis for professional clubs

Given that we had full information about the economic importance for only one of the two professional clubs, we could not extrapolate to all professional clubs.





Community clubs



Salford City Roosters



Wigan St Judes



Wath Brow Hornets

For the community clubs, we found an income range of £32,300 - £300,000, an expenditure range of £34,350 - £270,000 and a payroll range of £16,000 - £78,000

Synthesis for community clubs

The economic importance of the community clubs comes from their economic relationships with local companies and them providing remuneration in their territories, as well as employment for some of them.



SOCIAL IMPACT

The social impact valuation of sport in England has recently been researched by Davies et al (2016, 2019). From their research, the social impact valuation of a sport can be defined as an economic estimation of its social value derived from participation in terms of health, social inclusion and education / employment, as well as from volunteering. In the case of the Rugby Football League, this can be approximated based on the data we have been provided with by the organisation. The framework used for the calculations comes from Davies et al (2016, 2019). These authors identify 11 social outcomes and the changes sport makes in these outcomes, allowing them to estimate the value for each of them. The 11 social outcomes are as follows.

- Six health outcomes for adults: reduced risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke; reduced risk of breast cancer (females only); reduced risk of colon cancer; reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes; reduced risk of dementia; and reported improved good health (for adults not at risk in the five previous health conditions).
- One social inclusion outcome: reduction in crime for males aged 10-24 years.
- Two education/employment outcomes: improved education performance for people aged 11-18 years and enhanced human capital for graduates.
- One wellbeing outcome: improved life satisfaction for adults (with a distinction between players and volunteers).
- One social capital outcome: volunteering.

For the purpose of the present report, we assume that the values per person used by Davies et al (2016, 2019) for each social outcome in their research on sport in England hold true for the Rugby Football League. However, these values were for 2013-2014 while we are interested in 2018-2019. As such, we need to take into account the inflation from 2014 to 2018 in the UK in the final estimation (multiplier equal to 1.0803). To determine the number of persons used for each social outcome, we assume that the percentages of persons used for the different outcomes for sport in England by Davies et al. (2016, 2019) hold true for the Rugby Football League. In other words, the percentage of Rugby Football League players used for a specific outcome (in proportion of the total number of Rugby Football League players who would have been used for this specific outcome if all would have been at risk, e.g. adults, female adults, etc.) equals the percentage of sport participants used by Davies et al (2016, 2019) for the same outcome (in proportion of the total number of sport participants who would have been used for this specific outcome if all would have been at risk).



Table 3 Rugby Football League social impact valuation based on Davies et al. (2016, 2019)

Overall	Value per person (£)	Persons	Total (£)
CHD & stroke	3,635	1,007	3,660,395
Breast cancer	47,908	2	99,070
Colon cancer	47,908	6	288,435
Type 2 diabetes	3,545	243	862,925
Dementia	32,887	241	7,935,871
Good health	100	54,735	5,455,258
Crime	1,590	367	582,894
Education	1,221	60	72,949
Human capital	5,824	808	4,707,155
Wellbeing / players	1,127	56,234	63,376,194
Wellbeing / volunteers	2,357	7,500	17,677,502
Social capital	1,429	7,500	10,713,919
Total without taking into account inflation			115,432,565
Total			124,701,728

It is worth noting that Davies et al (2016, 2019) determine the age criteria for sports participants' inclusion by the review of evidence on the social impacts of sport (Taylor et al, 2015). Davies et al (2019, p. 9) note "The review found evidence of social impact and sport in health and subjective well-being for adults aged 16+." However, it seems that the literature focuses on adults aged 16+ rather than finds evidence of an absence of social impact and sport in health and subjective well-being for children. As such, we can question why such social impact would not hold true for children. Table 4 provides the Rugby Football League social impact valuation based on an adaptation from Davies et al (2016, 2019) for good health and wellbeing so as to include not only adults but also children (changes in bold compared to Table 3). With this second valuation, the Rugby Football League social impact is estimated at more than £185m.

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)

As explained in the methodology section, the Social Return of Investment (SROI) of a sport corresponds to its social impact (outputs) divided by the inputs needed to reach it. In the methodology section, it is also mentioned that in the present research, it was possible to extrapolate the expenses made by community clubs for the sport part (as opposed to the non-sport part such as bar purchases, TV subscriptions & licence, etc.). However, it was not possible to estimate the investment in the sport of Rugby League made by players and volunteers. In their research, Davies et al (2016, 2019) suggest breaking down the SROI estimates into societal and individual elements. They assume that the government funding of sport is aimed at generating health (societal element) while the investment made by sport participants and volunteers is aimed at generating subjective wellbeing (individual element). In the present research, it is assumed that subjective wellbeing comes from the investment made by players and volunteers (similar to Davies et al, 2016, 2019) while health outcomes come from the investment made by community clubs.

Based on the health outcomes calculated in the previous subsection on social impact, their social impact can be estimated at £411.52 per person. Based on the financial information provided for community clubs, their expenses specifically for the sport part can be estimated at £100.78 per person. This means that the SROI of the expenses made by Rugby League community clubs specifically for the sport part is $411.52 / 100.78 = 4.08$. In other words, every £ spent by Rugby League community clubs in sport generates a social return of £4.08.





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SOCIAL CAPITAL

In total four focus groups (comprising some 20 people in total) and six individual interviews were carried out across a number of sites (Warrington, Hull and Wibsey) and involving both professional and community clubs. Four of the six interviews were undertaken with participants who were community members and did not identify as Rugby League fans. The community members were Police officers (n=2), Sport development officers (n=1), a journalist student on placement (n=1), a teacher (n=1) and a retired social worker.

Institutional ethics approval was obtained prior to data collection. The focus groups and the interviews were conducted by Gabrielle Salomon, Luci Smith and Daniel Gallant (all doctoral candidates at MMU). Both the focus groups and interviews followed a semi-structured process where an interview guide was used to address core questions and prompt discussion (see Appendix 3). Prior to the focus groups and interviews the interviewer(s) explained the purpose and rationale of the study and described the process. The participants read an information sheet and signed a consent form immediately prior to the interview. The focus groups ranged in length from 30 minutes to 1 hour (and the interviews from 25 minutes to 55 minutes).

The transcripts of the focus groups and interviews were read independently by Marc Jones, Thomas Hostler and Jonathan Grix, who then agreed on the key themes. The analysis of the focus groups and individual interviews revealed four key themes regarding the social capital of rugby league clubs. These are that clubs bring:

- Social cohesiveness -
- Identity
- Aspiration
- Role models



These themes were evident across both those who volunteered with and were engaged in working for the club, and those from the smaller sample who were not Rugby League fans but were members of the community. It was noteworthy that the social benefits of a Rugby League club were recognised, and felt, by members of the community who were not fans of Rugby League. For this sample, the reach, visibility and value of Rugby League goes beyond its core followers.

Social cohesiveness

A key theme that emerged from the data was one of social cohesiveness. The Rugby League clubs were seen as providing opportunities to wide sectors of the society and are inclusive, family oriented organisations that bring people together. There were a number of illustrations of this.



So, for me and my background now as the foundation in the community, anyone pretty much can have the opportunity to represent their town through Rugby League. We've got the women's, we've got Physical Disability Rugby League, Learning Disability Rugby League, and we've got a wheelchair team as well. So, as far as anyone in this town can aspire to wear that Warrington shirt.

(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

It was noteworthy in the comments how the theme of inclusivity and the family nature of the sport came through. This was true at all levels of sport, including community clubs with participants saying “It is a big family. My full family are involved” (Volunteer, West Hull). This was often contrasted with football, which was generally seen as a more male-dominated, and elitist, sport.



So, you'd look around and you see the families that are in the club, in the ground, do you know what I mean? It's not the dads that's bringing the kids, it's the family that have come together, isn't it?

(Volunteer, Hull FC)

This inclusivity was recognised by those individuals who did not class themselves as Rugby League fans as evidenced by the following quote.



They do a lot for the community. I think my sister came here, something to do with a fitness thing they were putting on for the local community.

(Community Member, Warrington)



What is also interesting is the status that the club has puts them in a prominent, and in these communities unique, position to be able to reach into the community as evidenced by this quote from a Warrington Wolves, volunteer.

“ *The badge is the power... You see that badge, you know what it's associated with. And so, for the foundation to have that badge is major, it's the easiest bit. Because people straight away identify us as the club, which is brilliant, because it gives people that sense of belonging, that tribal aspect.*

(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

In summary the clubs were seen as more approachable, visible and “local” in the community compared to other sports, in particular football clubs. This helps to drive their community engagement. More than that it is seen as a family game, an inclusive sport for everyone in the community that brings people together (e.g., not just male “lad” football culture). These foundations help it to reach out to all members of the community and marginalised groups (disabled, unemployed, etc.). This is particularly important given that Rugby League clubs are often situated in areas of high social deprivation as evidenced by the analysis of the datasets provided by the Rugby Football League. As such it may provide an important support for social mobility (Spaaij, 2009).



Identity

In many of the discussions around social cohesiveness the notion of identity was prominent and a key theme that emerged. The clubs were seen as make a positive contribution to the identity of the town/city.

“ *The rugby club provides a ... sense of history, our sense of who we are, our sense of community as well.*
(Community Member, Warrington)

“ *...it's in our blood, really, locally, to have a rugby team, whether black and white or red and white.*
(Volunteer, Hull FC)

“ *Even if you go away on holiday, and it's like where are you from? And you say, 'Warrington' ... and I've had it before, is 'Oh Rugby League' and it does, it literally puts you on the map.*
(Community Member, Warrington)

Interestingly some of these quotes come from people who did not identify as Rugby League fans. So Rugby League is able to provide a sense of belonging and identity even to those individuals who do not necessarily support the club. A strong social identity is associated with positive pro-social behaviours (e.g. Hackel et al, 2017) and this is evidenced in the following quote.

“ *Warrington is made up of people from different backgrounds and different walks of life, some higher class and some lower class, but one thing I've noticed on match days, everyone comes together.*
(Community Member, Warrington)

This pro-social interaction is increased in times when there is success for a team (Jones et al., 2012) and Rugby League is no different.

“ *Yeah, a long, long time ago when I was a little girl, I can remember the excitement of coming into town when they used to bring the cup home, the Challenge Cup on the open top bus, things like that. I can remember Warrington market, everything was obviously primrose and blue back then. It really is that sense of coming together and getting behind your town.*
(Community Member, Warrington)

It is not surprising that the clubs contribute to a sense of identity in the community. People have a fundamental need to belong to groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and membership of a group, such as identifying and supporting the local Rugby League team, can provide a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).



Aspiration

The third theme identified was that the clubs provide an opportunity for people to achieve success and to develop. This was clear for those individuals pursuing a career in Rugby League.

“ *But I think with obviously the Wolves being the Super League club around, it gives them that affiliation with something that they can strive to achieve, be part of something that’s bigger. Like Matt said, the opportunity to be part of the game, but at a higher level.*

(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

But there was also a broad range of illustrations of how the aspiration touched many aspects of the community including the development of life skills.


“ *It’s about how they could develop and be better people. Try and give them the skills that they need when they get a little bit older in life. If they go on and make a rugby player, brilliant. That’s what they want to do, if they don’t then hopefully you had some kind of impact to enhance what they do later in life.*

(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

“ *It’s massive benefit, social benefit for kids. I think so, anyway. It teaches them discipline, it teaches them little core skills.*

(Volunteer, West Hull Club).





“ But as a community coach, it’s not just about the rugby. So, you’re having an impact on the lives of these kids. Not just as a rugby player, but some of the skills as coaches that you can give to those kids. Whether it be giving them confidence to speak in a group, the ability to move their body in different ways that they’ve not been able to do before, overcoming difficulties that they’ve had, being part of a team, just having that belonging to something.
(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

“ Clubs organise somewhere for them to go. So, there’s definitely a benefit of having local teams in the community to give students the opportunity to obviously develop the skills but also build some life skills as well.
(Community Member, Wibsey).

These findings support the idea that sport can be an excellent vehicle to teach life skills in particular to marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Danish & Nellen, 1997). This aspiration and opportunities cut across different sectors of society.

“ I’m mostly involved in the Disability Rugby League here at the Wolves, so I get to see first-hand opportunities now that necessarily weren’t about however many years ago. So, I see people every week like living the dream so to speak. They never thought they’d have the opportunity to be a rugby player and now they have. So, I get to see what it means to people, really.
(Volunteer, Warrington Wolves)

“ I’d like them all to hit Super League but the most important thing is we make a citizen out of that person. And they get boundaries in the rugby club which they possibly don’t get at home. They’ll get them at school but not in the same way. Because it’s voluntary to come to us, they don’t have to come, I think the boundaries are different, don’t you?
(Volunteer, West Hull).

Rugby League Dividend Report

2019



Sport Policy Unit of the
Business and Law Faculty

Social Imp

36%

of players are in the lowest
quartile of employment

46%

of players from lower
socio-economic groups

Economic Impact

Total annual economic impact
of Rugby League is estimated
at more than

£141m



act

is the economic estimation of the social value of Rugby League and is estimated at

£185m

41%

of players are in the lowest quartile for education and skills

42%

of players are in the lowest quartile of employment

50%

of players are in the lowest quartile for health and disability



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

sport policy unit
of the Business and
Law Faculty

That the Rugby League is seen as a vehicle for increasing aspiration is interesting and central to this is our final theme, that of role models.

Role models

Clubs provide role models to the local community. This theme is closely linked to the perceived family orientated nature of the clubs and its inclusiveness. And also to the theme of aspiration.

The community idolise these players that are in, all right they don't do everything, but to see the badge coming, doing what you're doing, just seeing someone wearing a badge it'd just be like that's brilliant. The club care about everyone.

(Community Member, Warrington)

The coach is a local lad, you know, so there's an empathy between the kids and the players who are going to see them saying, 'I used to go to this school. Mr Smith used to be my teacher,' or whatever. I think it has a big impact on youngsters."

(Volunteer, Hull FC)

Wolves have got a lot of local lads who play for them, who have come up the ranks from the local teams around. And that's very inspirational to the kids. ... I went in a Subway about three weeks back and you had a local player in the Subway talking to all the people. And that's great to see and that.

(Community Member, Warrington)

That sport stars, including Rugby League professionals, should be seen as role models is not surprising (Fleming et al., 2005). What is interesting is that a key aspect of the role models was their accessibility and perceived strong links to the local community. In sum, Rugby League clubs contribute positively to social cohesiveness, the identity of the town/city, aspiration, and provide role models. Many participants felt that the effects of these benefits were amplified given the clubs were situated in areas of high social deprivation as evidenced by the analysis of the datasets provided by the





THE RUGBY LEAGUE DIVIDEND REPORT IS THE FIRST IN THE SERIES OF RFL IMPACT REPORTS.

RFL Impact Series: Thought leadership insight-led pieces on the wider social outcomes from the sport, in particular in disadvantaged communities.

Women in Rugby League

The next report – in Summer 2020 – will focus on the wider impacts of the exciting growth in women’s (and girls’) Rugby League. What the development and growth of Women’s Super League has meant for female players with considerations including but not limited to self-confidence; body-confidence; identity; aspiration on and off-field including educational and professional development (including those athletes pursuing the Diploma in Sporting Excellence); mental fitness and wider community engagement. Similarly for the coaches and other volunteers at the forefront of the movement for women’s Rugby League.

The report will also consider the perception of RL and shifts attributable to the increased reach of women’s Rugby League, including media profile, value creation and investment, and the perception of female players in Rugby League, and in other sports, by established and new sports fans.

Disability Inclusion in Rugby League

This report – in late 2020 – will seek to evidence the wider impact of participation in Rugby League by people with a range of learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities on the players themselves, and also their social and family networks, coaches and other volunteers.

It will also provide learnings and insight around fan perceptions of players and the growth of disability Rugby League; and an understanding of the levels of familiarity with disability in and around the sport and the communities it serves; and the role of non-disabled people in facilitating others’ participation.

Additional consideration will be given to the experiences of people with disabilities who - through the sport’s social care partner Community Integrated Care - are engaged in meaningful volunteering in Rugby League which may lead to learning/paid work opportunities; with a view to understanding how this may be extended to achieve a significant additional impact with national learnings as the sport looks to the home World Cup in 2021.



MEASURING THE INSPIRATION AND IMPACT OF THE SPORT'S BIGGEST EVER EVENT

A transformational approach to measuring the InspirationALL legacy programme

The RLWC2021 team, in partnership with UK Sport and Sport England, has commissioned a large-scale social impact evaluation into the InspirationALL legacy programme to inform future national major events across sports with an innovative approach to measuring success and commitment to sharing knowledge.

The Sports Consultancy, in partnership with Substance, are undertaking an evaluation of the impact of the legacy programmes' effectiveness before, during and after the tournament in 2021.

InspirationALL programmes are designed to empower and inspire individuals and groups alike. Programmes range from community focused schemes such as mental health and wellbeing initiatives and the provision of educational resources, both designed to achieve local engagement while changing the attitude towards Rugby League by championing inclusivity; to larger, internationally driven programmes, such as the International Development Programme. By employing a partner to undertake the evaluation of these schemes more than 800 days before the tournament kicks off, RLWC2021 hopes to ensure the legacy left is one which makes a positive, measurable difference to people's lives. The work consists of qualitative evaluation – an honest assessment of the effectiveness of the InspirationALL programmes, and the impact they have on the communities where they are operating – the impact, positive or otherwise, the programmes have had on the lives of people engaged in them; and quantitative evaluation – the measurable impact of InspirationALL, for example in public health metrics, participation numbers, indices of happiness and community cohesion, and how these map out geographically and break down demographically.

CreatedBy Legacy Programme for Grassroots Facilities

On the 27 October 2016 the Minister for Sport and Civil Society announced the Government commitment of up to £25 million to host the Rugby League World Cup 2021. This included up to £15 million pledged to support the staging of the event and up to £10 million to build a legacy.

The £10 million legacy funding is focused specifically on grassroots Rugby League and the improvement of infrastructure in the form of community Rugby League facilities. The capital programme request was based on a targeted approach with investment focusing on the Rugby League core affinity areas in the North of England with the ambition to both retain and attract new participants, including a specific focus on lower socio-economic groups, as well as creating financially sustainable and welcoming community provision.





The 'CreatedBy' Legacy programme delivered by RLWC2021 and the RFL coordinate two strands to achieve this:

(a) large-scale funding programme a c.£9 million commitment to large-scale, strategically-led facility schemes (including Artificial Grass Pitches, ancillary facilities and multi-sport hubs)

(b) small-scale funding programme a c.£1 million small-scale, reactive, targeted fund, supporting multiple community organisations to access funding for low-level facilities improvements/maintenance and equipment.

The CreatedBy objectives are to support, strengthen and stimulate participation in Rugby League at the grassroots level, which will:

- Deliver an uplift in participation across the portfolio of projects receiving investment.
- Target participants, from lower socio-economic groups by ensuring that funding is invested in areas of deprivation representing 46% of all participants.
- Enhance the experience of people who currently play, watch and volunteer at grassroots Rugby League games and clubs.
- Retain existing Rugby League players within the game and reverse/arrest current drop-off rates in participation.
- To generate economic benefit across England and the areas in which legacy investment is directed.
- To deliver positive social impact in areas in which legacy investment is directed, derived from driving up participation, volunteering and engagement.
- To support community driven projects that deliver local benefit across two or more of the five outcomes in the Government's Sporting Future strategy: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development.

A £74.6M Economic Impact of RLWC2021

Government support for the staging of major events in England – and across the UK – is driven in large part by the economic benefit this type of activity can bring to the country at large, and to host cities and regions in particular.

Official figures show the UK economy benefited from a £14.2 billion uplift to trade and industry in the two years following the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, while Oxford Economics predicts the gross added value of the event could be as much as £41 billion by 2020. Similarly, research by Ernst & Young indicated that the 2015 Rugby World Cup injected £2.2 billion into the domestic economy, equating to an additional £982 million of GDP. When the Rugby League World Cup last came to our shores in 2013, host cities such as Cardiff (venue for the opening ceremony) and Manchester (where the final was played) enjoyed direct economic impact from those occasions alone of £8.5 million and £8.4 million respectively.

Using the internationally-recognised EventIMPACTS methodology, it is estimated that a Rugby League World Cup in England in 2021 will deliver a total economic benefit of £74.6 million compared to £10 million in 2013. Increasing the number of spectators the tournament attracted in 2013 by more than 50% is at the heart of this opportunity, while the compact nature of the event footprint it is believed will also encourage higher levels

of day trip and short-break domestic tourism and enable overseas visitors to spend more time exploring the host region, rather than making long transfers from one match centre to another.

Despite the government's Northern Powerhouse initiative making the host region the focus of significant public and private investment over the period to 2021, the authorities believe that staging the Rugby League World Cup in that year will add further impetus to the area's growth and offer economic benefit in areas other than those being targeted by central funding through, for example, the event's impact on the tourist economy.

SOCIAL IMPACT OF ALL THE RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 2021 LEGACY ACTIVITY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE TOURNAMENT ACROSS KEY COMMUNITIES

RLWC2021 are committed to ensuring that the tournament leaves a positive and long-lasting legacy on communities. The tournament organisers have commissioned the Sports Consultancy, in partnership with Substance, to undertake an evaluation of the legacy programmes effectiveness before, during and after the tournament.

RLWC2021, in partnership with the RFL, UK Sport, DCMS and Sport England, have created a variety of programmes designed to empower and inspire individuals and groups alike. The legacy programme has set out to deliver demonstrable, positive impacts on people's lives whilst addressing social mobility, particularly in hard to reach communities.

The true value of the RLWC2021 legacy programme is around inspiring both existing and new generations of consumers to engage with Rugby League in a range of different ways whilst delivering tangible social benefit and genuine long-lasting impact to the communities it works with.

Mental fitness, activity, volunteering, community cohesion and civic pride, learning and empowerment programmes by communities, for communities – with a unique commitment to measurement and evaluation.







CONCLUSION

The conclusion is intended to summarise the main findings of the research in relation to the output expected by the Rugby Football League. As a reminder, it was split into five outcomes:

- To quantify the economic impact of the sport.
- To quantify the economic importance of the sport.
- To quantify the social impact of the sport.
- To evidence that every £ spent on the sport generates a social return of £x.
- To grasp the meaning of a club to its community and the impact it has on social cohesion in that community (social capital).

The main findings are as follows:

- **The annual economic impact of the English clubs and central events is estimated at more than £141m.**
- **Community clubs have economic importance for their territory, having economic relationships with local companies and providing employment and remuneration.**
- **The social impact of the sport of Rugby League on players and volunteers is estimated at more than £185m.**
- **Every £ spent by Rugby League community clubs in sport generates a social return of £4.08.**

The social capital of the sport of Rugby League is demonstrated by the positive elements highlighted by volunteers as well as members of the communities who do not identify as fans of Rugby League in terms of social cohesiveness, identity, aspiration and role models.

Finally, this report evidences the positive contribution the sport of Rugby League makes currently in England in terms of its economic impact and importance, as well as social impact, return on investment and capital. Whether its future contribution will be as positive or even better depends on the level of human, infrastructural and financial resources it can generate and get. Funding allocated to the sport will be key to sustain its positive economic and social contribution in England.

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APPENDICES



Appendix 1 Evidence of social impact for Hull FC Foundation

Rugby Football League Database	Evidence of social impact	Additional information
Community players	73	
Community volunteers	56 (including Hull KR)	
Participation		
Sky Try programme	6720 young people aged 7-13	Over 60 local schools
Match day experience	2100 young people	Local schools and community clubs
Partner Schools Sport Programme	Primary schools	
Women's Rugby	U14s, U16s and Senior Level	
Bonus Youth Performance Centre and KCOM Community Centre	Local community organisations	
	TRY Line Girls	
	FC Tots	
	FC Touch Rugby	
	Local Sports Hubs (CSAF project)	
	FC Learning Centre (young people 16-18)	
	Hull City Council	
Provision of four sports wheelchairs (Hull City Council - Wheelchair Fund)	To enable sustainable disabled sports programmes	
Education/Employment		
FC Employment through Sport (Comic Relief)	149 NEET young people 16-18 from highly deprived area	
Better Futures programme (Henry Smith Charity)	Young people 16-18	
Arco	Over 50 young people	
Health		
Teaming up for Health Engage' and 'Old Faithful' (Royal British Legion)	Local community	
FIT4FC (Awards for All)	Ex service personnel	
Touch Rugby league social event	47 adults	
Social Inclusion	Over 14	
OASIS	Young people at risk or already convicted	
Hull FC's Community Champions	Over 400 under privileged young people	



Appendix 2 Evidence of social impact for Warrington Wolves Foundation

Rugby Football League Database	Evidence of social impact	Additional information
Community players	42	
Community volunteers	60	
Participation		
Sky Try programme	4372 primary school children years 3 and 4	70 Primary schools and 11 High schools
Schools History "The Pack"	KS2 children	Devised by local primary school teachers
WolfClub	Over 100 young people aged 12+	Woolston 6th Form College
Disability Rugby League (Children in Need Wolf Print 2 and Awards for All)	Young people with disabilities aged 14+	
Volunteering our Game Changers	Volunteering Opportunities	
Women & Girls Rugby League Teams	#thisgirlcan campaign support	
Community RL Coaches	Supports salaries and equipment costs	
Golden Gates Housing Trust	Assists the employment of engagement officers	To deliver sports related programmes in housing trust estates
Heritage Lottery 'Pass it Back' Project	Funding to employ P/T officer and deliver web based app	To support a volunteer programme
Warrington Borough Council Sports Tender	Provides a sports development network to support participation	
Handball	Monies held for the handball team	
Education/Employment		
Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneur Project	Provides a contribution to salary and course materials	Development of social enterprise around leadership
Children's University	Funded by schools to support aspirations of pupils through lifelong learning	
Health		
RL Cares Health Offload (Big Lottery)	To introduce, implement, develop and manage a mental health programme	For at risk men in the local area
Heads Up (Cheshire Community Foundation's Youth Social Action Fund)	Young people and their families	
Warrington PCT Obesity Project	Funding for sport and arts Youth Club for young people with additional needs	
Social Inclusion		
Warrington Borough Council Short Breaks Tender	Provides salary support to provide inclusive activities for the most vulnerable	
Active Cheshire Count Me In		
Community		
Activities and events support	101	Very first Annual Dinner in October 2018
Visits	105	
Arts Council England Wolf Print Music	Funding for equipment to deliver a music project	
Rugby League Cares	Funding for part-time salary	
Cultural Partnership Curious Minds	to deliver Arts Awards across Foundation projects	
Green Lane Dance		
International		
Kenya	Young Trustees	
Australia	First Physical Disability World Cup Rugby League Challenge	

Appendix 3 Interview Guide

Indicative Focus Group Interview Schedule with Volunteers

1. What benefit does having a Rugby League team bring to the town?
2. What benefit is there to you personally from having a Rugby league team in the town?
3. What is unique about your rugby league team specifically and the benefits it brings to the town and the people?
4. Does the Rugby League team offer something different to the other sporting teams/clubs in the town?
5. What community work does the Rugby League team do?
6. Are there any benefits or advantages with having the community work associated with a rugby league team.
7. What would be the consequences if the RL team was to fold
8. Why do you volunteer at the club?
9. To what extent do you consider Rugby league to be part of who you are?
10. What is the best thing about the club in your opinion?

Community Members Interview Schedule

1. What benefit does having a Rugby League team bring to the town?
2. What benefit is there to you personally from having a Rugby league team in the town?
3. What is unique about your rugby league team specifically and the benefits it brings to the town and the people?
4. Does the Rugby League team offer something different to the other sporting teams/clubs in the town?
5. What community work does the Rugby League team do?
6. Are there any benefits or advantages with having the community work associated with a rugby league team.
7. What would be the consequences if the RL team was to fold?
8. In what way does the Rugby Team contribute to the town's identity?
9. Who benefits most from the Rugby Team (which cohort(s) = young/old/players etc.)
10. Does the success or failure of the Rugby Team impact people in the town? In what way?





COVID-19 AND THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF RUGBY LEAGUE



‘Rugby League is more than a sport’

As the pandemic hit, Rugby League swung into action. In doing so – in big and small ways – players, professional and grassroots clubs, Foundations, charities and volunteers, demonstrated just why the sport is a ‘social service’ in our core communities.

Many of the clubs played a leading (often the leading) local role in the co-ordination of voluntary support services as the national crisis unfolded.

In more usual times professional and grassroots clubs are passionate about using the power of sport and the strong local influence of their club brand to make the biggest difference possible to the lives of local people who need their support. Each Club operates its own strategy with activities traditionally focusing on four core areas: Sports Participation, Education, Health and Wellbeing, and Social Inclusion.

Working in close partnership on a range of programmes in conjunction with the Rugby Football League and other local providers, the mission is simple: to make local lives better. All projects are delivered by passionate, hard-working and highly skilled qualified coaches, staff and volunteers who champion daily the role that sport can play in engaging, educating and inspiring people of all ages, abilities, educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

Throughout the national lockdown period clubs and the Foundations utilised stadiums, players, the badge, the reach – everything they had – to make a measurable difference across Rugby League communities. Their work, generosity and care made a huge difference in difficult times to local people, and supported the work of other community groups and statutory partners including schools, the NHS and public health partners, the police and particularly local authorities.

Mobilising expertise in mental and physical fitness

The sport came together to preserve and enhance the mental and physical fitness of players, coaches, fans, match officials and administrators during the Coronavirus pandemic. ‘Rugby League United’ saw Rugby League Cares in association with the RFL, Super League (Europe) and RLWC2021, respond to calls from Government, the NHS and Sport England for sport to take the lead in keeping people mentally as well as physically fit as the nation moved into lockdown.

Working alongside players, community organisations and national mental health charities such as Mind and Samaritans, Rugby League United gave people the practical tools and techniques they need to stay in the best of health in difficult times.

The campaign built on the fantastic work already undertaken by RL Cares and club Foundations in delivering the Offload programme – a men’s mental fitness project aimed at tackling depression and anxiety, which has already engaged with over 2,000 men since its inception in 2017.

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Coronavirus restrictions meant that face-to-face Offload activity was suspended for a period and replaced by 'virtual' support to Offload squad members and extended to the whole RL family.

Current and former players were at the heart of the delivery helping people to look after themselves and stay active at home; enjoy good nutrition; manage stress and anxiety; foster good relationships at home; and access 24/7 support if needed. Activities have been varied and innovative from live and interactive e-Offload sessions with players to videos and other content - Mindfulness sessions, cookery classes, fitness challenges, quizzes and much more.

Grassroots players and clubs

With team activities are on hold, and a restart some way off, the RFL turned to online initiatives, with the support of Sport England, to keep players engaged with Rugby League.

The #SkillToPlay programme saw some of the game's stars showcasing and sharing their skills with the next generation – inspiring them to learn and to emulate the skills of their heroes through a series of online skills and drills.

Hot on the heels of the successful #SkillToPlay came #FitToPlay, a programme aimed at a slightly older Rugby League audience. The programme offered home workouts, athletic development and other activities to help secondary school pupils and adults stay in shape – or build back better – for a future return to Rugby League.

And throughout 2020 the RFL has remained in constant contact with community clubs as they strive, collectively, to return to play in 2021. The RFL has worked with clubs and league administrators to understand the challenges, share good practice, identify resources and to protect the overall health of the community game.

Clubs, foundations and personalities demonstrate why Rugby League is 'more than a sport'



Clubs and their players – from grassroots to full-time professional – and foundations and charities, became Rugby League’s social services operating at the heart of their communities.

Players from all professional clubs such as Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings were enlisted to check in on isolated and vulnerable fans. Former England international, Matty Smith, was one of those who made phone calls to see that Vikings fans were in good health, and to lift their spirits with conversations about Rugby League and life in general. A similar scheme was up and running in neighbouring Warrington, where legions of elderly fans were delighted to receive calls from Wolves players during lockdown.



A simple “how are you doing, do you need anything?” made all the difference to many vulnerable and isolated people. Some people needed more – and once again Rugby League was on the frontline, whether directly through clubs or through their Foundations who have been relentless in their commitment to their local communities.

When panic-buying decimated supermarket shelves, Hull FC Foundation made sure that the most needy weren’t left behind. Staff collected and delivered food parcels to the over 70s, people living in residential homes, low-income elderly families and those made unemployed due to the pandemic. Hull FC Community Development Officer Liam Welham spent hours collecting and delivering food parcels for some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. West Bank Bears was one of many community clubs to have brought essential items to elderly people – each Bears’ parcel carrying a personal message to the recipient. Swindon St George was another community club whose players delivered food parcels to elderly and vulnerable people across their district.



Barrow Raiders, recognising that some people were too proud to ask for help, offered a discreet food parcel delivery service to make sure that nobody went hungry. Callers didn’t need to give a name, they just needed to tell the club what they needed.

Among the many others organising food deliveries within their community was St Helens amateur club Blackbrook who teamed up with the Steve Prescott Foundation, the local business community and comedian Johnny Vegas. Former Rugby League stars Lee Briers and Tommy Martyn joined in, and the initiative even earned a special video and social media plug from Hollywood star and South Sydney Rabbitohs owner Russell Crowe.



Community clubs nationwide continue to be as ingenious as they have been generous. **Distington Amateur Rugby League Club** launched a 'Friend not Foe' service for people in Workington who were self-isolating, offering not only food deliveries but also collecting prescriptions and other essentials to make sure that nobody within their locality was left isolated and lonely during lockdown.



North Herts Crusaders delivered not only food but services including dog walking for isolating or shielding residents in Hitchin as well as contacting the club community to ensure supporters and their families know support is at hand.



Swinton Lions have always had a special relationship with their supporters – none more so than during lockdown when the club offered vital support to people self-isolating or in need of assistance. Any assistance. Club members and players were just a phone call or a text message away and were there in a flash.

Rugby League was also there to support frontline health and social care workers. When social care charity Community Integrated Care – the sport’s Learning Disability Rugby League partner – needed personal protective equipment (PPE) urgently to maintain essential services, the Vikings joined forces with the Liverpool FC Foundation to get PPE to the frontline.

And as the nation took to the streets each week to applaud its NHS heroes, former **Sheffield Eagles** chairman Ian Swire and his wife Jill put their hands in their pockets to the tune of £20,000 so that a local restaurant could offer free meals to NHS workers.



Wigan Warriors Community Foundation underpinned the work of schools and the NHS by providing a host of engaging activities which benefited school children’s physical and mental wellbeing throughout the pandemic. The foundation moved quickly to transfer its activities online when schools needed flexibility – always ensuring no child is left out.

And, of course, a number of players at all levels have been on the frontline as health workers, teachers, emergency services in / through the Forces.

Leeds Rhinos Women’s Super League star Abby Eatock was one of them. “When you join the Army, you sign up to help people” she said. “So I just want to get out and do that.”



Swinton prop Lewis Hatton is in his final year of training to be a nurse. At the height of the first wave of Covid-19 he was one of thousands of people who opted in to be fast tracked into hospitals as the UK began the battle with the virus.




When Oldham Assistant Coach Brendan Sheridan became very poorly with Covid-19 and required hospital treatment the club community rallied together, and players nominated each other to 'run a mile for Shez' and raised money for the community doing just that. Since recovering Sheridan has helped thousands of others by openly shared his story in regional and national media, raising awareness of the impact of the virus on young and fit people including its impact on mental wellbeing.



Judith Cummins MP, Chair of the All-Party Group on Rugby League

'2020 has been an exceptionally difficult year for the whole country and the impact of Coronavirus has hit hardest in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. That is why the selfless efforts of Rugby League clubs including many players, staff and volunteers, the charities and individual supporters should be recognised for the impact they have had and continue to have in supporting our communities through lockdowns and restrictions. They have often been the glue keeping communities together. They have certainly helped many thousands of people to get through whether by delivering food and medicine, or offering a friendly face and listening ear, and keeping people active and lifting spirits.



The All-Party Group of Parliamentarians works to champion the sport and its unique place in the national sporting and social landscape – the measurable difference or dividend that Rugby League delivers in our communities. This has never been more evident than during 2020.

Many Rugby League people should be extremely proud of what they have done to support their neighbours and local community. It is vital and often unsung work which has been essential and will help our communities and the country recover as we look to a better 2021, the return of the sport at all levels, and the national tonic of a home World Cup.

On behalf of the All-Party Group, to everyone in Rugby League who has demonstrated the values of the sport throughout this period, our recognition and our heartfelt thanks’.



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