

2025-26

SportRCT

IMPACT REPORT

How our work, in conjunction with key partners, has supported the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to get more active, more often



X | f | i @sportrct

www.chwaraeonrhct.co.uk | www.sportrct.co.uk
01443 562202 • sportrct@rctcbc.gov.uk

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

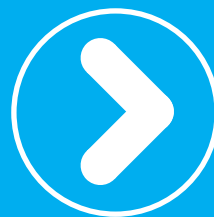
Sport RCT

Sport RCT is part of the Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC Leisure Services Team. We are dedicated to helping the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf become healthier and more active. We work in partnership with facilities, sports clubs, community organisations, businesses, schools and National Governing Bodies. Their support is invaluable to us and the success of our programmes.

This report shares headline data that we report each year to evidence the impact of our work, as well as a collection of written case studies which provide further detail on a number of our key projects. Case studies are titled under one of three headings: Getting children more active, Getting adults more active, and Developing People.

The Team

Further case studies, previous reports and more information on our team can be found on our website: www.sportrct.co.uk



Gavin Bennett



Jodie James



Rachel Davies



Richard Webb



Scott Woodford



Alisha Knapp



Nick Voleinik



Carly Jones



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



192

sports clubs supported

131

sports clubs accredited



67



recreational opportunities offered on our Community Programme

1,876



participants in recreational opportunities

£681,328

grant funding into sports clubs



£1,781,328

investment into sport in RCT



226

athletes received Gold Cards



3,174

new club members



509

new club volunteers

228

new opportunities

£214,000 income in to Leisure generated by Health Development

91%

of schools engaged with our programmes



£19,405

funding invested in to school projects



158

Active Leisure new programme participants



74

teachers trained



7,156

mass participation participants

2,270

Health Development referrals



17,250 social media followers



2,449 people used our app



66,359 website views



4,218

supported physical activity sessions



183

Young Ambassadors recruited and trained

1,537

hours completed through our Leadership Programme

1,896

hours delivered by our coaching team

119

opportunities offered as part of our holiday provision

2,096

participations in our holiday provision

After engaging with our programmes...

93% of participants felt healthier



96% of participants felt happier



88% of participants felt more confident



80% of participants made new friends

92% of participants are more active, more often



96% of participants intend to continue being physically active



Food and Fun 2025

Food and Fun is a national, fully funded Welsh Government programme administered by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). It is a school-based education programme that provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children during the school summer holidays. The Food and Fun ethos is: "Working together to promote healthy living, positive well-being and improve engagement with education and the school during the summer holidays."

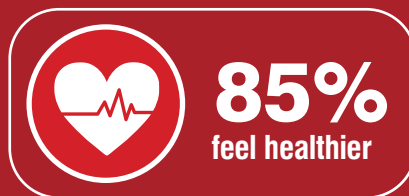
This year the project took place in **14** primary schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf, including 3 special schools. We provided **14** community coaches to support the project, with 6 new coaches being trained in Community Food and Nutrition Skills Level 2. This ensures that all staff are trained to provide the correct advice and messages to children who attend. In total, our coaches provided **758** hours delivery, supporting **577** children. The children loved engaging with our sessions and in particular they loved playing non-traditional sports such as archery.

Prior to the programme start we supported the facilitation day, which provided opportunities for staff from RCT and Bridgend to gain confidence in delivering set nutrition lessons

and provide high quality physical activity sessions. Food and Fun is a cross-partnership programme, drawing on a variety of stakeholders who work together to support schools to deliver. The strength of the programme lies in this collaborative working, which provides a range of opportunities to robustly support the school and wider community. Having the right staff is vital, and the programme is most successful when a school really embraces its ethos.

"It has been very encouraging to try new foods, which sometimes is a battle at home. I have found them more active at home and wanting to play outside more."
Parent

"Food and fun was excellent. I tried a new fruit. I also really liked the mini games in the sporting session."
Child



Summer of Fun 2025

Our 2025 programme ran for five weeks and offered 95 different sessions and camps for participants aged 2-25 years old and their families. In total we had 1,400 bookings and received over £2,300 income which helped to cover some programme costs. We also supported our YEPS (Youth Engagement and Participation Service) to offer an additional 36 sessions, which included free 3G access.

As part of our programme we created three hubs, across Rhondda, Cynon and Taf. Each of these hubs hosted sports tots sessions, multi sports camps, disability sport sessions and family racquet sports sessions. Multi sports and sports tots were well attended and very popular, but we did struggle to attract large numbers to our disability sessions. Family racquet sports was a new offer this year, to promote the opportunities available in our leisure centres. Unfortunately the take up was fairly low, but the families that attended really enjoyed the sessions. We also added two of our Fun Family Fitness sessions to the programme to promote the sessions in Abercynon and Tonyrefail Sport centres.

We delivered 5 free sport sessions for families in Penywaun, Trebanog, Rhydyfelin, Mountain Ash and Tylorstown. The sessions were popular, so we plan to offer these

again. The sessions were free to access and proved popular, so we plan to offer these in future. It was great to see a transition of participants from these free sessions, across to our central paid sports camps.

We partnered with Cwm Cycling Cynon again to offer Ride a Bike days, promoting their hire service, and allowing families to ride for free. We also delivered a series of sport specific camps, working in partnership with 5 community sports clubs, to promote them and boost their junior membership. Attendance was high, with 6 out of the 7 camps reaching full capacity.

“A great way to start the day and get active! Lots of great ideas to take away and do at home.”

Sports Tots

“Enjoyed it so much, he has signed up to take part in hockey on a weekly basis.”

Hockey camp



YEPS Football in Treherbert

This project was developed in partnership with the Council's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS), to address anti-social behaviour in the Treherbert area. YEPS provide the statutory Youth Service for Rhondda Cynon Taf and offer young people aged 11-25 a variety of activities across school and community settings. This project was initially proposed following a fire at the new 3G pitch which was lit by local youths. Young people we spoke to told us that there was no provision for them locally, and they were frustrated that they were unable to access the pitch without a formal booking.

Weekly sessions were organised at the new 3G pitch, led by YEPS staff and supported by our casual coaching team. The sessions were free, with all equipment provided, and all young people aged 11-25 were invited to attend, regardless of ability. Promotion was shared via social media and school channels, and young people were encouraged to promote via word of mouth.

12 young people attended the first session to play rugby. Over time it has evolved into a football session, which 84 young people now attend on a weekly basis. The sessions are informal and provide a safe and engaging environment for young people to play and enjoy football. A group of young people are

completing their referee qualification to help support staff during the sessions.

YEPS staff have engaged other partners such as Barod to educate the young people on substance abuse and have led activities to promote community cohesion and pride in their local area. Community wardens that attend the sessions have built positive relationships and seen a marked improvement in behaviour. As well as football, there is a 'get your steps in' walking group which is attended by a group of girls that challenge themselves to increase their steps and improve their fitness.



"Baglan helps me connect with my friends and cool down by playing my favourite sport. It keeps us fit and healthy and it's really nice." Participant

"I love going to the Baglan with my friends to play football. Every other astro is always closed. The coaches are fair and fun." Participant



Y Pant Comprehensive gym project

We funded a targeted physical activity programme which was delivered at Lyon's Den Boxing Gym in partnership with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). The project supported pupils from Y Pant Comprehensive School and aimed to provide an alternative environment where they could engage in physical activity, learn new skills, and improve their confidence, mental health, and overall wellbeing. We targeted boys and girls aged 12–16 who were identified as needing additional support due to behavioural concerns, low school attendance, or wellbeing issues. Many of the participants had limited engagement with traditional school-based activities, so the project aimed to offer something different, helping young people to establish positive routines while enjoying exercise and social interaction.

We were initially approached by Lyon's Den Boxing Gym, which had recently opened its facility and was keen to engage young people from the surrounding community. We facilitated a meeting with the YEPS team and Lyon's Den presented the range of activities available at the facility and how these could be adapted to support the needs of local young people.

Boxing and Hyrox-style fitness sessions were delivered initially, as these activities provide a

dynamic and engaging form of exercise for teenagers. Sessions were interval-based workouts, combining elements of boxing training with functional fitness exercises. The programme was led by the young people, with them sharing what activities they enjoyed most and what motivated them to participate. This kept sessions engaging and relevant to the group. Each week, the activities were adapted by the coaches depending on the group's mood, behaviour, and ability levels, ensuring that all participants could take part at a comfortable pace while still feeling challenged.

The impact of the sessions was very positive. Participants enjoyed the sessions and frequently asked when they would be returning for more. For some young people, the experience sparked a longer-term interest in fitness, with several participants choosing to join the local gym and continue training independently.

“I was scared to engage in the sessions the first week but now I don't care, I just try my best” Participant

“I joined Lyon's Den boxing club and train 3 times a week” Participant



Coleg y Cymoedd girls gym project

We collaborated with Coleg y Cymoedd (Aberdare campus) and CF44 gym to deliver a 12-week project designed to support inactive female learners aged 16–20 to begin their physical activity journey. The project aimed to break down barriers that often prevent young women from engaging with the gym environments, particularly the perception that gyms are male-dominated spaces. By creating a supportive and welcoming setting, the programme hoped to improve participants' confidence, increase their knowledge of gym equipment and training methods, and encourage them to continue participating beyond the project.

In addition, the initiative aimed to educate learners about wider aspects of physical health and wellbeing, including topics such as sleep, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.

Seven inactive female learners were chosen to take part, who had little to no previous experience in a gym environment. Before the programme began, we organised an informal "meet and greet" session at the college. This session provided an opportunity for staff to explain the aims of the project and answer any questions from interested students. Once the group was selected, participants attended weekly one-hour sessions at CF44 Gym, located close to the college campus.

Over the 12-week period, learners took part in a variety of gym-based activities delivered by experienced staff. Sessions were tailored to the group's needs and ability level and included High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), Hyrox-style workouts, and introductory strength and conditioning sessions. The programme focused on building fundamental fitness skills while gradually increasing participants' confidence in using gym equipment and understanding different training styles. Participants not only improved their physical fitness, strength and overall health, they have also developed a positive relationship with exercise and built new friendships and social connections. Many of the participants reported feeling less intimidated and more motivated to continue exercising, so now that the 12-week project has finished, participants are much more likely to access the gym on their own.

The workouts were very fun to do and made us work hard.

Participant



12
sessions



70%
feel healthier



85%
intend to continue taking part



7
participants



75%
feel more confident



85%
are more active, more often



85%
feel happier



100%
made new friends



UV Sports in Aberdare Community School

This project in Aberdare Community School aimed to increase participation in extracurricular activities and targeted students aged 11 to 16, particularly those who were less involved in traditional sports. The initiative was designed and led by the school's Young Ambassadors, who consulted with their peers to identify the sports they were most interested in trying. After gathering feedback, the YA's created a project that offered sports like dodgeball, badminton, and cricket. To make these activities more engaging, the sports were played in the dark using UV equipment. The YAs pitched their idea at our Dragons' Den event and were awarded £500 to bring the concept to life. The funds allowed them to set up and manage the sessions, which were offered during lunchtime.

The project has not only renewed ACS's extracurricular programme but has also had a measurable impact on attendance, thanks to an innovative approach to student rewards. Students ran an attendance competition where the class with the best attendance won the opportunity to participate in the UV Sports sessions. Since the implementation of the UV Sports club, there has been a noticeable increase in engagement across the board. Participation numbers in other extracurricular activities, such as badminton, have risen, with

some classes reaching capacity. The project has given the YA's a platform to develop leadership skills, allowing them to take charge of session planning and delivery. Their growing confidence has empowered them to lead lessons independently, and they are eager to expand the project further. The UV Sports project aligns with the school's broader goals of developing healthy, confident individuals and creative contributors. By using sport and physical activity as a means of engaging students, the project has successfully cultivated a more active, engaged, and empowered school community.

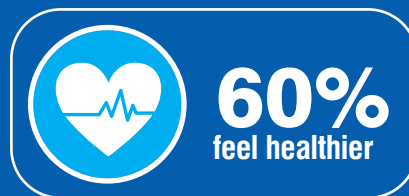


"Glow in the dark dodgeball genuinely made me feel healthier because I was moving constantly."

"I felt really happy afterwards - the lights and atmosphere made it a brilliant experience."

"It has encouraged me to be more active because I actually enjoyed taking part."

"I made new friends because we had to work together as a team in the dark."



Hirwaun YMCA Climbing project

The Sport RCT Physical Activity Fund is a small pot of money that allows individuals or groups to access funding to provide doorstep opportunities for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to become more active in their local community. The fund aims to take away the financial burden of getting a new activity off the ground by helping alleviate financial risk with start-up costs such as equipment.

The fund supported a climbing project delivered by Hirwaun YMCA which targeted children and young people aged 5-15. Using the funding, Hirwaun YMCA was able to develop and introduce an indoor climbing wall at their centre, enabling young people in the area to access a unique and engaging physical activity on their doorstep. Three introductory climbing sessions were organised for young people who attend the YMCA's play and youth provision. Alongside these sessions, training was provided for YMCA staff to ensure they could facilitate climbing sessions safely and confidently in the future. This approach ensures that the project is sustainable and that young people will be active long term.

The project aimed to provide positive recreational activities for children and young people who may have limited opportunities to participate in sport or physical activity. Through climbing the YMCA aimed to improve physical

health, fitness, and overall wellbeing while helping participants build confidence, resilience, and self-esteem through achievable challenges. The sessions were designed to be inclusive and accessible to all genders and abilities, including beginners and children who were not currently engaged in regular physical activity.

They chose climbing after consulting with the young people attending the centre. During play and youth sessions, rock climbing was identified as an exciting option that could be delivered locally, giving participants the opportunity to challenge themselves, overcome fears, and celebrate personal achievements. The activity encouraged teamwork, communication, and peer support as children worked together to solve challenges and motivate each other. Long term the project aims to help children develop stronger self-belief, improved resilience, and healthier lifestyle habits.



"I loved it, especially working as a team and helping one another"
Participant

"I didnt think I would be able to do the full wall but I did and want to keep doing it."
Participant



Getting children and adults more active

Hockey

Two Hockey clubs that share the same home pitch, Rhondda Ladies and Caerphilly & RCT Men, decided to partner together to tackle the decline in hockey participation locally. Their joint aim was to recruit junior members aged 6 to 12, whilst also working towards an increased membership across all ages.

The clubs approached us for help, and we were more than happy to get involved. Both clubs accessed our Community Sport fund which supported them with equipment, facility hire and marketing materials for new junior sessions. Caerphilly & RCT Hockey club also accessed £3,705 of Be Active Wales funding from Sport Wales to help with the junior section start-up costs. We organised a junior hockey camp in August 2024, as part of our Summer of Fun programme, and 10 young people attended. Feedback was so positive that we organised a further 3 hockey camps during 2025, one in February half term and two during the summer. Over 80 young people attended across the three days. At each camp participants were given 'golden tickets' entitling them to a free training session with the clubs. Transitioning participants from the camps to clubs proved difficult because of clashes with other commitments, but each club took on around 3-5 new members. In addition to the camps

the clubs have also been working hard to develop links with local schools, delivering free taster sessions after school.

Rhondda Ladies also accessed our Community Sport Fund to start a Back to Hockey session. The sessions have been running for two years and an average of 12 women attend each week. Some of these women have children that play for the junior section. Having a Back to Hockey session on the same night means that they are able to be physically active at the same time as their child, which is convenient and accessible.

“I have nothing but praise for Sport RCT. Alisha has helped us to access grants and purchase the equipment needed to successfully deliver hockey sessions and improve the resources we have at Ysgol Afon Wen.” Club Coach

“My daughter lacks so much confidence, this has made her feel comfortable to be able to join new sports and just give the new sessions a go.” Parent



Llantrisant Tennis Club

Llantrisant Tennis Club asked us for support to grow their membership numbers. We worked with them to develop a project which aimed to expand the club's junior programme by increasing capacity, with a particular emphasis on engaging more children under 8 and girls. The project also aimed to attract new adult players and provide better flexibility and accessibility to members with sessions spread across a wider range of days.

We provided funding which supported two coaches to complete further coaching qualifications. We also funded equipment to support the new junior sessions. Four new sessions were introduced and the club promoted them via social media and primary school tasters. Two sessions were added every Friday after school for children aged 4 to 8 years, and on a Monday evening they started sessions for under 8 girls and adult newcomers. The club have also added an additional coaching session every Wednesday.

This project has made smart use of quiet court times and helped the club to increase membership and strengthen community participation. The club provided new junior members with equipment which has removed a barrier to participation, and allows new players to practice outside of the club sessions.



“This is a great provision for my 5 year old son. He thoroughly enjoys the class and coach Charlotte is fantastic.”

Parent

“Joining has had such a positive impact on me. I’m exercising more, getting some weekly stress out and doing it with a great bunch of people. I was so nervous to start back but I’m loving it!”

Adult participant



4
new sessions
per week



90%
feel healthier



100%
intend to
continue



27
participants



90%
feel more
confident



90%
are more active



100%
feel happier



100%
made new friends

A Step A Head

A Step A Head (ASAH) was developed to build on the successful partnership between us and the RCT Work and Skills team. After several fitbit projects being delivered to Works and Skills groups, with us taking the lead, the team asked to deliver the projects themselves on a wider scale. We trained 11 members of their staff and have provided support which has allowed them to start 13 groups and engage 64 participants. The Work and Skills team have used the project as an engagement tool to target economically inactive individuals across RCT.

This programme contributes to the development of resilient communities by providing physical activities which have proven to help build confidence and improve general well-being and positivity. It helps to reduce social isolation and address poor mental health. The Work and Skills team have targeted groups that include under-represented groups such as over 50s, lone parents, women and disabled people. Here is a summary of 3 of the groups.

Tylorstown - A group of mothers and grandmothers from a Parent & Toddler group. All expressed they wanted to feel better and were thinking about 'doing something' - this project gave them motivation to start. "The course helped me

get to know the mothers of the group better." **Participant**

Pontypridd - A group of clients that were receiving one to one support with a Work & Skills keyworker. All expressed that their reason for joining was to improve their mental health and wellbeing, and that they found the project gave them motivation to walk more.

"I now feel more inclined to walk and take part in exercise." **Participant**

Tonypandy - A group of mothers and grandmothers who attend the Mothers Matter project. "As well as increasing my confidence in walking alone, I've been more conscious of what I am eating too. I've also made a great group of friends that I enjoy socialising with outside of the group."

Participant

“Through this project we have been able to engage with groups of individuals within our communities that we previously struggled to. Reaching our target audience has enabled us to achieve outcomes within our project and contribute to the People and Communities section of the RCT Corporate Plan.”

RCT Work and Skills team



Wannabe Warriors Walking Football

Wannabe Warriors are a walking football group based in Tonyrefail. Their aim is to offer men a regular opportunity to either start or get back into playing football, helping them to improve their physical fitness and mental wellbeing and socialise and meet new people. At the start of 2024 their founder Nick contacted us for support to start the group because he was tired of travelling to play elsewhere. We helped Nick with governance, funding, and promotion and sessions began a few months later. We provided resources and templates, and our Community Sport fund covered some start up equipment and the first 20 weeks of pitch hire. We have provided ongoing support and advice, and have helped them through our Club Accreditation scheme for the last two years.

They started with one weekly training session and 12 players. They now have two sessions a week, and 45 registered members. They have 3 teams that play competitively as Under 50's, Over 50's and Over 60's. 25% of their players were inactive before joining, and an additional 29% were only active once a week.

The group have established themselves locally and secured a number of local sponsors and grants. They have affiliated with the Welsh Walking Football Federation, and have played in many friendlies and

competitions with other clubs and participated in events such as the annual Anglo-Saxon competition held at Solihull Moors FC. They organise regular social events and they have formed strong bonds, where they encourage and support each other.



“Joining walking football has reignited my joy of life. Its like being a kid again, going out to play. I look forward to the sessions, and no matter what the weather is doing, I always come away feeling fantastic and with a smile on my face. Since I started walking football I have more energy throughout the day and I sleep better at night too.”

Player

“Having a weekly focus to go to and unwind doing something I love, can't beat it. Great social atmosphere with a good bunch of lads.”

Player



Yoga in Llantwit Fardre

The Sport RCT Physical Activity Fund is a small pot of money that allows individuals or groups to access funding to provide doorstep opportunities for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to become more active in their local community. The fund aims to take away the financial burden of getting a new activity off the ground by helping alleviate financial risk with start-up costs such as equipment.

The fund supported Llantwit Fardre Leisure Centre to provide low intensity class to attract new customers who are inactive or unable to attend more vigorous classes. The centre wanted to add yoga and chair yoga to their fitness class timetable, targeting the 60+ population in the local area. Over a 5 week period, 62 people attended yoga, and 61 attended chair yoga.

Both low intensity exercise classes are helping customers to improve their flexibility, balance, and muscular strength, whilst providing social opportunities are benefiting their mental well-being. The class has attracted new members, while also providing additional opportunities to current members.

Customers have said the classes have helped them with health issues due to previous medical conditions. They feel more mobile since attending to the class. They feel more active and some now walk to the centre to attend the class. They feel the class is inclusive to all abilities and ages and feel the class structure is adaptable for all taking part. Customers feel that their confidence has grown through their mobility, and this has had a positive impact on their general well-being in everyday life.

Instructor



Made for Mams at Sobell Leisure Centre

The Made for Mams programme at Sobell Leisure Centre provides exercise opportunities for women during pregnancy and the early postnatal period. Two classes are delivered each week – Aqua Natal Yoga, and Post Natal Fitness. The classes are designed to be welcoming, relaxed, and accessible to women of all abilities.

The Aqua Natal class aims to improve physical wellbeing, build confidence in movement during pregnancy and recovery, and create a supportive environment where mothers can connect with others going through similar experiences. Participants are encouraged to move at their own pace, which helps ensure women feel comfortable, particularly those who may feel uncertain about exercising at this stage of life. The physical health benefits of the class are particularly evident for those experiencing pelvic girdle pain. Several women attending the sessions reported significant improvements in mobility and pain management after participating regularly. In some cases, women who initially required crutches or struggled to walk experienced noticeable improvement after only a few weeks.

Following Aqua Natal sessions, mothers can progress to the Bubbles class, which takes place immediately afterwards, and is suitable for babies aged three months and over.

Participants are also signposted to the Post Natal Fitness class, and other appropriate mainstream activities. This pathway supports women to continue their physical activity journey long term. 10 mothers who attended Aqua Natal have become Leisure for Life members, with several family members also joining as a result. 5 children have progressed into the Bubbles sessions, giving them a great start to their physical literacy journey.

Alongside the physical benefits, the classes provide an important opportunity for social connection, allowing pregnant women and new mothers to meet others locally and build supportive friendships. Many women attending the classes have formed friendships and peer support networks, including WhatsApp groups and regular social meet-ups. For some mothers, the sessions provide a valuable opportunity to build a community.

“Aquanatal yoga is one of the first activities I advise my patients on. They find it helps decrease pain and build strength and confidence moving through their pregnancy and preparing them for labour. It is one of the best resources we have in RCT for people who are pregnant or in the postnatal period.”
Physiotherapist



RCT Comets Korfbal Club

We have been proud to support the establishment and growth of RCT Comets Korfbal Club. The development of this new and inclusive club has introduced the sport of Korfbal to RCT for the first time, and encouraged adults, both men and women, to become active. The club aimed to attract people who were not currently participating in sport, as well as those who may have played sport in school but had since become inactive.

We were approached by the club founders, and we supported them to complete our accreditation process, ensuring they had the correct governance, policies and structures in place. Achieving accreditation enabled the club to access our Community Sport Fund, which provided £300 to cover the initial hall hire costs and allow the club to begin delivering regular sessions. Three club volunteers attended our Sports First Aid course, ensuring that sessions could be delivered safely for all participants. We also provided the club with marketing support by designing and printing flyers, that were used alongside social media promotion. The club also attended local events such as Pontypridd parkrun to raise awareness. We also supported the club to apply for and secure £4,673 from the Sport Wales Be Active Wales grant, which enabled them to purchase essential equipment including korfbal posts.

Since launching, the club has made excellent progress, recruiting 15 new members, some of whom had not previously taken part in sport. The sessions have created a welcoming and supportive environment where people can enjoy being active, develop friendships and feel comfortable being themselves. The club is already performing strongly in the Welsh Korfbal League, currently sitting at the top of Division 2. They hope to recruit enough members to enter two teams next season.

We are continuing to support the club as it grows and have recently re-accredited them and provided Community Sport funding to support their upcoming "Niche Try Sport" sessions, designed to introduce more people to korfbal.

Joining Comets has given me something really precious. It has given me so many new friends and a real sense of belonging. It's been great to see the positive impact that it has on people that join our team and it's something I am really proud of being part of.

Participant



Mens Marauders

Kevin from the Health Development team initiated this project to introduce pickleball and indoor curling sessions as part of the Marauders Men's Health Sports & Fitness Hub at Llantwit Fardre Sport Centre. The sessions offered community members opportunities to socialise and be physically active.

A qualified sports leader led the session to provide structure, support and organisation. Within the group, one volunteer offered their sporting ability while another coach stepped forward to formally lead the session. This layered coaching model ensures both peer support and structured guidance, reinforcing skill development and participant enjoyment.

We supported the sessions with funding for venue hire and equipment through our Community Sport Fund and provided marketing materials and promotion. The long-term sustainability of the project was enhanced through collaboration with the Exercise Referral coordinator (enabling individuals with health conditions to engage safely), and with Sport In Mind and Marauders Men's Health, who help promote the sessions and align with mental-health and community-well-being goals. This integrated approach combining expert coaching, volunteer-driven leadership, resource support, and mental-

health focused partnerships ensures the project is enjoyable, developmental, and sustainable for all involved.

The sessions have provided significant benefits to participants, delivering positive outcomes across physical health, mental well-being, and social inclusion. They have improved strength, stamina, and balance, enhancing their confidence and everyday independence. For those managing mental health challenges, the opportunity to learn new skills offered structure, focus, and a sense of achievement. Just as importantly, the project created a supportive group environment, reintroducing access to sports and physical activity that had not been available for some time. This combination of physical improvements, skill development, and social connection contributed to meaningful enhancements in overall well-being.

“ A gym environment can feel intimidating, but coming to this session is completely different. I don't feel judged here. Instead, I feel supported, and each week I know I'm doing something positive to improve my health and regain a confidence in myself - Participant ”



Sub Aqua clubs

Rhondda Cynon Taf is home to three sub aqua clubs, each based at different leisure centres. Historically, engagement with these clubs had been limited and, in recent years, all three had reported similar challenges, including declining membership numbers, increasing running costs and limited access to funding. Recognising that the clubs required support, we worked proactively to strengthen them and encourage new participation.

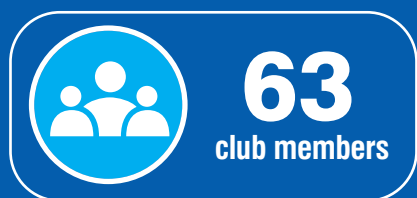
We first encouraged all three clubs to join our Club Accreditation Scheme. Through this process, we check clubs' governance and ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place. This process also gives us a clear understanding of each club's situation, membership base and development needs, enabling us to offer them tailored support. To help raise awareness of the clubs, we worked with them to improve their visibility and promotion. We offered marketing support, with the design of new flyers, posters and promotional flags. These materials have been shared locally, emailed to schools and promoted via social media.

To encourage new people to try the sport, we worked with the clubs to offer "Try Dive" sessions. Our Community Sport funding covered pool hire costs and equipment costs to allow clubs to offer these sessions free of charge. As a direct result of the sessions, all three clubs

welcomed new members, with around 15 new people now regularly participating. We have also supported the clubs to access additional funding through the Sport Wales Be Active Wales grant. In total, the three clubs have secured £19,252, which has enabled them to invest in new diving equipment, train volunteers and run development courses. The funding has had a significant impact on the sustainability of the clubs, allowing them to improve the quality and safety of training while reducing financial barriers for new participants. The investment in equipment has been particularly valuable, with clubs able to purchase diving gear that can be loaned to new participants who may not yet be able to afford their own.

Across the three clubs there are now 63 members and 17 active volunteers supporting regular activities. Clubs have also started to attract a cohort of younger members who will help sustain the sport locally for years to come.

We are extremely grateful to Sport RCT for their support helping our club to grow and develop. The guidance and encouragement we received, especially from Alisha made a huge difference. Her advice, patience, and understanding of our club needs ensured we could present a strong application that truly reflected our goals. Club volunteer



Active Baby training

Active Baby focuses on the movement and well-being of children from 0-18 months, looking at development and the ways families and childcare professionals can support and nurture babies during their first 1000 days. The training highlights the importance of play and how physical literacy is central to a babies development; contributing to physical and emotional wellbeing.

We partnered with Early Years Wales (EYW) to deliver the programme in Rhondda Cynon Taf. They delivered 3 Active Baby training sessions at 3 childcare settings, to 39 practitioners. The training aims to provide practitioners with opportunities for reflection and an opportunity to add to their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Practitioners from Aman Family Centre, Valleys Kids, and Nightingales Nursery completed the training, equipping them with essential physical development knowledge to support the 6-week Active Baby at Home programmes, which have already been delivered in their settings. Additionally, staff members participated in an Active Baby at Home 'Train the Trainer' session, meaning they are now fully trained to deliver Active Baby at Home within their settings.

By working with different sites, EYW aimed to identify how the training could be adapted to different communities. They recognised the importance of involving parents and the wider community to ensure consistency and continuity, and witnessed how the programme can be used to create a stronger

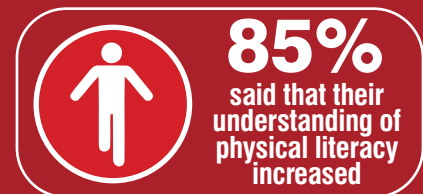
partnership between childcare professionals and families. The long-term impact of the project is that children and families will have access to enjoyable and meaningful movement opportunities that foster the development of essential motor, cognitive, and sensory integration skills. As a result, children will grow into confident, competent, and motivated movers who embrace physical activity as an integral part of their daily lives.



"I have already incorporated some of the information into my baby massage course."

"I will ensure move things are put out to increase babies' movement in our sessions and talk to parents about what I have learnt."

"[The Active Baby pack] has clear identified ideas and suggestions that are user friendly. Referring to the pack will be quick and easy to do during sessions."



Active Toddler training

Active Toddler training provides practitioners with opportunities to offer the toddlers in their care with whole body experiences and an environment that promotes open-ended spontaneous movement play geared to the movement needs of the individual child. It aims to focus the practitioner to observe, tune in, feel movement, and respond in stage appropriate ways enabling them to facilitate opportunities throughout the day.

We partnered with Early Years Wales (EYW) to deliver the programme in Rhondda Cynon Taf. They delivered 3 Active Toddler training sessions at 3 childcare settings, to 32 practitioners from Aman Family Centre, Valleys Kids, and Nightingales Nursery. The training has equipped them with key physical development principles that align with the new Growing Movers 6-week programme, which will be delivered in each of the settings, to follow on from the 6-week Active Baby at Home programme.

By working with different sites, EYW aimed to identify how the training could be adapted to different communities, addressing specific needs for a toddler room in a childcare setting as well as the community needs of families and babies. They recognised the importance of involving parents and the wider community to ensure consistency and continuity. By engaging parents the settings have developed stronger partnerships with families, reinforcing the benefits of movement at home and in the community. This approach ensures that the

core principles of the training are understood and applied consistently, maximising its long-term impact on both children and caregivers.

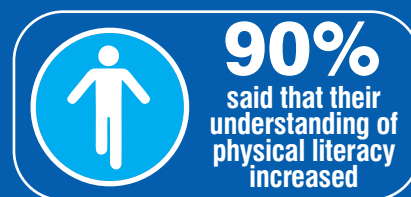
As a result of the training, children and families will now have access to enjoyable and meaningful movement opportunities that foster the development of essential motor, cognitive, and sensory integration skills. As a result, children will grow into confident, competent, and motivated movers who embrace physical activity as an integral part of their daily lives.



“The Active Toddler pack will support delivery by promoting child development and support for their families. The pack is parent friendly easy to follow and use for both facilitator and parent/carers.”

“It was a pleasure to be part of the day and I feel really enthused by the information provided on the day.”

“Best course attended in a long time.”



Community Sport Fund 2025-26

The Community Sport Fund was introduced two years ago following consultation with local club volunteers. Many reported difficulties covering start-up costs, and in some cases, groups lacked the formal structure required to access external grants. The fund was created to provide flexible financial support that could respond quickly to local needs. We also use our Accreditation scheme to help clubs and groups to access larger external funding such as the Be Active Wales Fund, where necessary.

This year our Community Sport Fund has played an important role in strengthening grassroots sport. The fund has helped accredited clubs and community groups to start new activities, develop existing provision and increase participation in sport and physical activity. Grants of up to £500 have helped cover essential costs such as equipment, facility hire, volunteer development, and marketing. The fund has supported a wide variety of activities, including traditional sports clubs and recreational activities such as walking football, back to netball and touch rugby.

Once a club/group is accredited we provide hands-on support, working directly with them to develop project plans and complete applications. Once the application is approved, we offer ongoing support throughout delivery and collect feedback to measure the impact on the club and participants. This year the Community Sport Fund has supported 151 clubs and

community groups, and as a result, more than 110 new sporting sessions have started, over 260 volunteers have been recruited or trained, and more than 1,700 new participants have been engaged.

The impact of the fund goes beyond financial support. By supporting volunteers, strengthening community clubs/groups and increasing access to sport, the Community Sport Fund is helping to get more people, more active, more often.

“The funding has had a huge impact on our Club. We have been able to offer coaching to schools and the wider community with the equipment and coaching opportunities!”
Harlequins Community and Bowls Club

“The funding has made a real difference to our walking netball sessions. It has helped us provide equipment and support our volunteers, allowing more women to stay active, improve their health and build friendships.”
Walking Netball Warriors



Young Ambassadors 2025/26

The Young Ambassadors programme is a long-standing leadership initiative delivered by us and created by the Youth Sport Trust. We have been running the programme across schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf since 2011, supporting young people to develop leadership skills and become positive role models within their schools and communities. The programme is aimed at pupils from Year 5 onwards in both primary and secondary schools and provides opportunities for young people to inspire, influence, mentor, and lead others through sport and physical activity.

A key part of the programme in RCT is our Dragon's Den fund, which allows ambassadors to apply for funding to deliver projects aimed at increasing participation in physical activity within their school or local community. This year we funded 20 projects, investing over £4,900.

Each year we hold a celebration day for primary-aged ambassadors to celebrate their achievements and meet peers from other schools. Ambassadors who complete more than 50 hours of volunteering are invited to attend a day of fun activities, which not only recognises their efforts but also strengthens connections between schools. To further celebrate success, we introduced a Young Ambassador of the Month award. This award

highlights the positive impact ambassadors are having in their schools, from running clubs and mentoring younger pupils to creating inclusive opportunities for others to be active.

We recently introduced a volunteer log for ambassadors to record their hours. The log encourages reflection, allowing them to consider what they have learned and how they can improve. Feedback shows that ambassadors are recognising the development of important values such as respect, kindness, leadership, and inclusion while also identifying areas for personal growth such as improving confidence when speaking in front of others.



"In Gelli, it has promoted student leadership and has got more children involved in sporting activities. The Young Ambassadors have run their own after school club and have been sharing the skills they've learnt with other children in the school."
Teacher - Gelli Primary

"I've influenced my friends by doing assemblies in my school and encouraging others to do sports."
Ambassador



Jacob Lewis

Jacob's journey with us is an example of how opportunities, supportive mentoring, and experience can shape someone into a confident, capable person. Beginning as a student on placement, Jacob quickly demonstrated enthusiasm, reliability, and a natural ability to engage with children and young people. His progression highlights both his personal growth and the effectiveness of our development pathway.

During his student placement Jacob delivered many multi sport and physical activity sessions bilingually. He built confidence working with children and young people of varying abilities and learned how to adapt activities to meet different needs and group dynamics. He demonstrated strong communication skills and a willingness to learn. His positive attitude, reliability, and ability to build rapport with participants quickly stood out.

Recognising his potential, we offered him a paid coaching role, giving him greater responsibility and independence. Jacob has delivered high quality sessions across schools, community venues, and holiday programmes. As a trusted member of the team, Jacob took the opportunity to join our StreetGames project, where he worked with young people in community settings, often in areas with lower engagement in sport and physical activity. This role required a different skill set, one that Jacob embraced. His ability to connect with young people and adapt to their needs made him an asset to the project.

Most recently Jacob has stepped into the role of Community Sport and Physical Activity Leader, where he plays a key role in helping increase participation across RCT. His journey is an example of how support, work experience, and personal motivation can create meaningful career pathways in sport and physical activity.



“Sport RCT have supported me over the past 9 months by giving me opportunities to learn, network and grow myself into becoming a more confident and knowledgeable person.”

Jacob

“Jacob’s growth illustrates how vocational pathways can produce impactful coaches - and he now stands out as an effective, values driven practitioner whose influence extends beyond the university into the wider community.”

Dean Parsons, senior lecturer at University of South Wales



198 hours delivered

Since becoming a coach with SportRCT...

I've had more opportunities to network and build connections with partners

My confidence has grown

I've become more active, more often

I feel I've made a positive impact in all my roles

Alana Sargent

Since 2021, Alana has developed a diverse and impactful coaching and community engagement portfolio across Cardiff and RCT. Her work spans disability sport, community fitness, safeguarding, dementia support, and club development. She is recognised for her commitment to inclusion, player welfare, and creating accessible, enjoyable environments for people of all ages and abilities.

Alana's journey began with the Cardiff Blue Dragons Wheelchair Rugby League programme, where she has played an instrumental role in promoting inclusive sport. As a coach, her focus has been on player development, building confidence, and ensuring that the environment is welcoming for both new and experienced players. Alana is also the club safeguarding officer, ensuring that the club operates according to best practices for welfare. Outside of community sport Alana also leads accessible fitness sessions in Tylorstown Welfare Hall, aimed at improving physical health for a variety of community members. Alana also delivers tailored sessions for individuals living with dementia. Sessions focus on improving mobility, stimulating memory, and fostering enjoyment, creating a warm and energizing environment for participants.

In 2025 Alana joined our coaching team, where she has expanded her coaching portfolio to deliver disability sport, via holiday camps, school engagement days, leisure centre sessions, and partnership work with the Autism Life Centre. Alana's dedication to

inclusive leadership ensures that every individual, regardless of age, ability, or background, can participate meaningfully. She has built a strong foundation of trust, consistently demonstrating her ability to manage people, facilities, and processes with care and competence. Looking ahead, Alana is focused on continuing her professional growth. She has recently completed Disability Inclusion Training Level 2 and 3 and aims to achieve insport Silver for the Cardiff Blue Dragons. Through her work, Alana has not only inspired others but has also found a passion in helping create environments where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to be their best selves.

“
Sport RCT have helped me build my confidence and inspire me to always improve. I feel I have a positive impact in my role, helping people to reach their health and fitness goals as well as reducing barriers for specific target populations to access sport and physical activity.
”

Alana



269 hours delivery

Since becoming a coach with SportRCT...
I have been able to make my network of contacts broader
I am a lot more active
I feel more confident in my delivery

Volunteer of the month

We launched our Volunteer of the Month recognition scheme in January 2016 to throw a spotlight on the army of community volunteers that make sport happen. Thousands of volunteers dedicate their time and energy each week to support hundreds of sports clubs and community settings. These clubs and settings are vital in providing sport and physical activity opportunities to children and adults across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The public nominate and we select a worthy winner each month. The winner receives a certificate and gift voucher, and we use our social media, website and app to give them recognition. Over a ten year period we have received over 300 nominations and 101 volunteers have been recognised from across 25 different sports.



Knowing my team mates contacted Sport RCT to nominate me was very special. This award is a fantastic idea and has recognised so many volunteers and encouraged others to volunteer too.

Volunteer of the Month recognises your efforts as a volunteer. You never know if you are doing a good job within a role. This award helps to validate your efforts; bringing pride and joy to your club.

After 50 years service to my club it was fantastic to receive recognition from outside of the club. I appreciate the gesture.

Whilst I dont volunteer for recognition, it can be easy to feel underappreciated as not many people understand the time and effort you need to put in. Receiving my award was such a shock But to see such an initiative was so refreshing. And to know I had been nominated by someone in my community made it all feel worthwhile!



300
nominations
received



94%
felt happier



94%
think volunteer
recognition is
important



101
volunteers
recognised



100%
appreciated the
recognition



100%
felt recognised
and rewarded



100%
felt valued



Pickleball

Pickleball has exploded in popularity with adults and the aging population due to its low impact nature. Over the last five years we have worked hard to support the growth of Pickleball within our leisure centres, clubs and community groups. We have supported two clubs in Llantrisant and Treorchy with funding and promotion, helped five leisure centres to add Pickleball to their weekly timetables and have even organised the first pickleball leaders course within Wales. Groups such as Men's Marauders have also taken up the sport with our support as a physical activity offer for their participants.

There are now 15 Pickleball sessions per week across the county borough, with over 250 people attending these each week. We estimate that there have been over 65,000 participations in Pickleball since 2020. 14.3% of participants were inactive before joining one of our pickleball sessions, with a further 52.4% only active once a week.

We plan to continue developing the sport of pickleball, ensuring that the clubs, sessions and community groups have the required resources to grow and flourish. We are hoping to encourage more of our leisure centres to offer sessions, and we are also looking to host the first level 1 & level 2 pickleball coaching courses in Wales.



“Thoroughly enjoyed learning a new sport and skills, meeting new people and getting more active. It has helped me physically and mentally.”

“I am someone who never played sport really when I was younger. Pickleball was a great way to get me into a sport without it being intimidating to start.”

“We play for two hours on a Monday night, where I usually end up doing about 12,000 steps during the session. It's a workout but doesn't feel like one at all - you're playing games for 2 hours and having fun.”



Testimonials

We work with a wide variety of local and national partners. These partnerships are vital to the success of our projects.

Over the past 12 months, Sport RCT and RCT Work and Skills have developed a highly productive partnership through the joint coordination and delivery of 12 cohorts of the A Step Ahead project. Through this we have been able to engage with groups of individuals within our communities that we previously struggled to do. Reaching our target audience has enabled us to achieve outcomes within our project and also contributed to the People and Communities section of the RCT Corporate Plan.

RCT Work and Skills

We have truly valued working in partnership with the Sport RCT Team to deliver the Active Baby at Home programme. We have been able to reach families at a critical stage, empowering parents and carers with the knowledge, confidence, and practical tools to support their baby's development during the first months of life. Collaboration has strengthened the quality and reach of the work, ensuring it was relevant, accessible, and rooted in local communities.

Early Years Wales

Our partnership with Sport RCT continues to be a huge asset to Play Services. Their team brings energy, expertise, and a shared commitment to getting children active through fun, inclusive opportunities. Working together strengthens our play events, offering a wider variety of engaging activities that help children build confidence, try new experiences, and simply enjoy being active. Having Sport RCT alongside us enhances the quality of every event, and we're proud to collaborate with a team who values children's wellbeing and play as much as we do.

RCT Play Development

Sport RCT Spotlight

Our monthly Sport RCT Spotlight is a great way for us to highlight fantastic schools, sports clubs, community groups and projects that are getting more people, more active across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Visit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sportrctteam to find more testimonial quotes and all monthly spotlights.

Sport RCT

2025-26

IMPACT REPORT

JN: 53907-15 May 2026

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.

Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg / You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh.

X | f | o | @sportrct

www.chwaraeonrct.co.uk | www.sportrct.co.uk

01443 562202 • sportrct@rctcbc.gov.uk



RHONDDA CYNON TAF