THE RUGBY LEAGUE DIVIDEND

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL Impact of Rugby League

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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

Sport has a very special place in the social fabric of our nation. It has the power to engage us as individuals and groups, bring us together and enrich 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
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.

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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 in 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 4 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 2 professional clubs and 2 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 Gouguet (2010) and CDES (2017) to 4 clubs. For this research, it has been agreed with the Rugby Football League to focus on 2 professional clubs (Hull FC and Warrington Wolves) and 5 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 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.

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

Table 1 Economic impact of Hull FC Foundation in 2017
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income and endowments</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Entering and spent in territory</th>
<th>Local vs. national</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Donations and legacies</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other trading activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Room hire</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising events</td>
<td>54410</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching and activities</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service charges</td>
<td>25500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to kit and equipment</td>
<td>3839</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deposit account interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from charitable activities</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>270439</td>
<td>231317</td>
<td>National except £39,122 from Warrington Borough Council Sports Tender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income and endowments</td>
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<td>231317</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising funds</td>
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<td>Refreshments</td>
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<td>Fundraising expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
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<td>231317</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gross value added multiplier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic impact</td>
<td></td>
<td>523632</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 4 Nations. The latter is an international tournament. There is an international series most years. For the purpose of this study, we use the 2016 4 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 4 Nations was estimated at £5.2m across 6 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**

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.
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:

- 6 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).
- 1 social inclusion outcome: reduction in crime for males aged 10-24 years.
- 2 education/employment outcomes: improved education performance for people aged 11-18 years and enhanced human capital for graduates.
- 1 wellbeing outcome: improved life satisfaction for adults (with a distinction between players and volunteers).
- 1 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).

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.
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.
SOCIAL CAPITAL

In total 4 focus groups (comprising some 20 people in total) and 6 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).
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)

Aspiration

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 these 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)

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 Rugby Football League.
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 £892 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.
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 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).

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.
REFERENCES


Rugby League World Cup 2021 (2018). Rugby League World Cup 2021 facility legacy grants open for applications on 23 October – four weeks to go! Internet link: https://www.rugbyworldcup.com/article/63/rugby-league-world-cup-2021-facility-legacy-grants-open-for-applications-on-23-october-%E2%80%93-four-weeks-to-go


**Appendix 1: Evidence of social impact for Hull FC Foundation**

### Rugby Football League Database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of social impact</th>
<th>Additional information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community players</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community volunteers</td>
<td>56 (including Hull KR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>6720 young people aged 7-13 Over 60 local schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match day experience</td>
<td>2100 young people Local schools and community clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Schools Sport Programme</td>
<td>Local community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Rugby</td>
<td>TRY Line Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus Youth Performance Centre and KCOM</td>
<td>FC Tots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td>FC Touch Rugby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Sports Hubs (CSAF project)</td>
<td>Local Sports Hubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC Learning Centre</td>
<td>(young people 16-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull City Council</td>
<td>149 NEET young people aged 16-18 from highly deprived area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of four sports wheelchairs</td>
<td>To enable sustainable disabled sports programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull City Council - Wheelchair Fund</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Education/Employment

- **FC Employment through Sport** (Comic Relief)
- **Better Futures programme** (Henry Smith Charity)

#### Health

- **Teaming up for Health**
- **Engage’ and ‘Old Faithful’** (Royal British Legion)
- **FIT4FC (Awards for All)**
- **Touch Rugby league social event**
- **OASIS**
- **Hull FC’s Community Champions**

#### Social Inclusion

- **OASIS**
- **Hull FC’s Community Champions**

### Evidence of social impact

- **Participation**
  - Sky Try programme
  - Schools History “The Pack”
  - Disability Rugby League (Children in Need Wolf Print 2 and Awards for All)
  - Volunteering our Game Changers
  - Women & Girls Rugby League Teams
  - Community RL Coaches
  - Golden Gates Housing Trust
  - Heritage Lottery ‘Pass it Back’ Project
  - Council Sports Tender
  - Handball

- **Education/Employment**
  - Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneur Project
  - Children’s University

- **Health**
  - RL Cares Health Offload (Big Lottery)
  - Heads Up (Cheshire Community Foundation’s Youth Social Action Fund)
  - Warrington PCT Obesity Project

- **Social Inclusion**
  - Warrington Borough Council Short Breaks Tender
  - Active Cheshire Count Me In

### Additional information

- **Community**
  - Activities and events support
  - Visits
  - Arts Council England Wolf Print Music
  - Rugby League Cares
  - Cultural Partnership Curious Minds
  - Green Lane Dance

- **International**
  - Kenya
  - Australia

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**Appendix 2: Evidence of social impact for Warrington Wolves Foundation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rugby Football League Database</th>
<th>Evidence of social impact</th>
<th>Additional information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community players</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>70 Primary schools and 11 High schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community volunteers</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Devised by local primary school teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>4372 primary school children years 3 and 4 Over 100 young people aged 12+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sky Try programme</td>
<td>X52 children</td>
<td>Woolton 6th Form College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools History “The Pack”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Rugby League</td>
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<td>(Children in Need Wolf Print</td>
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<td>2 and Awards for All)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering our Game Changers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women &amp; Girls Rugby League Teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community RL Coaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Gates Housing Trust</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery ‘Pass it Back’ Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council Sports Tender</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Handball</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Education/Employment

- **Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneur Project**
- **Children’s University**

#### Health

- **RL Cares Health Offload (Big Lottery)**
- **Heads Up (Cheshire Community Foundation’s Youth Social Action Fund)**
- **Warrington PCT Obesity Project**

#### Social Inclusion

- **Warrington Borough Council Short Breaks Tender**
- **Active Cheshire Count Me In**

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- **International**
  - Kenya
  - Australia

- **Very first Annual Dinner in October 2018**
- **First Physical Disability World Cup Rugby League Challenge**
- **To introduce, implement, develop and manage a mental health programme**
- **Young people and their families**
- **For at risk men in the local area**
- **Development of social enterprise around leadership**
- **Provides salary support to provide inclusive activities for the most vulnerable**
- **Very first Annual Dinner in October 2018**
- **Funding to employ P/T officer and deliver web based app**
- **To support a volunteer programme**
- **Monies held for the handball team**
- **Provides a contribution to salary and course materials**
- **Provides a sports development network to support participation**
- **Funding for sport and arts Youth Club for young people with additional needs**
- **Funding for equipment to deliver a music project**
- **Funding for part-time salary**
- **To deliver sports related programmes in housing trust estates**
- **Provides a sports development network to support participation**
- **Funding for sport and arts Youth Club for young people with additional needs**
- **Provides salary support to provide inclusive activities for the most vulnerable**
- **Very first Annual Dinner in October 2018**
- **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?