

boost>

20 Sporting Essays

*Celebrating 20 years of
Boost Charitable Trust*

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Essays



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Boost was established in 2005 and is a grant-giving charity. Over the past 20 years the charity has awarded more than £2.9 million in grants across 78 different sports and physical activities.

The charity's mission is to provide impactful funding and support for inspiring programmes which help improve the lives of the disadvantaged and disabled through the power of sport.

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20 Sporting Essays

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FOREWORD

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic Games, was an unashamed Anglophile, and was infatuated by the team values so heroically described in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. However, his quest to capture global support for his Olympic initiative was almost derailed by many of the major powers who argued that sport was not meant to be fun. Rather, it should have value on the battlefield – individual fitness and skills like horse riding, boxing, gymnastics and fencing.

The shame is that ever since the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, almost every high-profile sport has been hijacked by big business. And whilst this corporate raid may have triggered undeniable advancement in human sporting achievement and around-the-clock event coverage, grassroots sport has struggled to keep up. We know this is the case as there is hardly a sports club anywhere in the UK that is not gasping for financial breath.

In 1994, John Major's government introduced the UK National Lottery with a fanfare. The aim was to support community causes including sport.

However, it is difficult to spot too many differences in the Blair government's 2002 Report – *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives*, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's more recent 2023 Report *Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity*. The harsh reality is that even after hosting a world-beating Olympic and Paralympic Games, the UK population is increasingly obese and is still disappointingly inactive.

Sport England's mission is to make sport and physical activity a normal part of life for everyone in England, regardless of background, gender, bank balance and post code. It is a brilliant mission, but they are unlikely to succeed.

Multiple difficulties stand in the way – inaccessible facilities, poverty, poor education, poor nutrition, social and ethical prejudices, and an apparent incapacity to stretch down into the darkest corners of society where help is most needed. It is so disappointing, as we know that sport is not only fun, but it is also good for our physical and mental health.

Part 1 of this series of essays looks at where Boost fits into the national options for sports funding. Part 2 reflects on the social issues and challenges faced by the amazing sports programmes backed by the charity. And Part 3 ventures into the future.

Bearing in mind that Boost has now been active for 20 years, I am rather embarrassed by how little I knew about the underlying issues and challenges faced by the programmes we fund. These 20 essays certainly made me think. Hopefully, they will make you think too.

Robert Houston MBE

Chairman of Trustees

Boost Charitable Trust

PART 1.

Where does Boost fit in?

Sport is a multi-billion dollar global industry, so how can Boost Charitable Trust, which awards grants of around £200,000 a year, possibly make a difference? It sounds implausible, but we do.

It does because it is focused. It is current. It is relevant. And it is personal. But it is only part of a giant funding jigsaw.

Part 1 looks at the different funding options open to sports organisations in the UK.

1. Leaving a valuable legacy

Almost by any measure, 2005 was a momentous year for British sport. Coincidentally, it was also the year that Boost Charitable Trust was established.

It was the year when England regained the Ashes after 18 years in the wilderness; when Liverpool fought their way back from 3-0 down to win the Champions League against AC Milan; and when Paula Radcliffe won the London Marathon for the third time, albeit only after an embarrassing public toilet stop!

Most significantly though, it was the year when Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee, announced in Singapore that the rights to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games had been won by the city of ... London. The Games were secured on predominantly three promises:

- To accelerate the transformation of East London.
- To make the UK a world-leading sporting nation.
- To inspire a new generation of young people to take part in physical activity.

It was the third one that resonated most loudly with the IOC and Boost's trustees.

Most commentators would agree that the London Games were the most successful Olympic and Paralympic Games ever. But has the country kept its promises?

Transforming East London?

Yes. The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park has most definitely made a major contribution.

The traditional image of East London is of smoggy slums, run-down docks and criminal gangs. It was also the home of London's smelliest industries.

Whilst the development of post-war New Towns provided agency for the start of mass slum clearance and resettlement, it was the construction of Canary Wharf as a financial centre in the late 1980s, and the arrival of the Docklands Light Railway, that truly kick-started the transformation of the area. New homes and new shopping facilities came in their wake.

Here was a 300-hectare tract of derelict and heavily contaminated land with an uncertain future. And yet, apart from the world-class sports facilities themselves, the successful delivery of the Games has spirited the ongoing construction of 33,000 new homes and student living, the redevelopment of Stratford Railway Station, the huge Westfield Shopping Centre, new facilities for six universities, an Arts and Culture quarter, hotels and swathes of landscaped open space with over 13,000 trees.

When compared to any previous, or subsequent Olympic Park development, London unequivocally wins the gold medal.

A world-leading sporting nation?

Yes, we are. And there is a national expectation that we will remain so.

In the 19th Century, Britain was the leading codifier of most of today’s global team sports. And we are still renowned for having more world class sports venues than anywhere else in the world. Consider – Ascot, Epsom, Henley, the London Marathon, Lord’s, the Oval, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, St Andrew’s, Silverstone, Twickenham, Wimbledon and Wembley. And that list excludes our fantastic Premier League football stadiums. Moreover, some of these are the spiritual ‘home’ of their respective sports. Quite simply, in this respect, no other country gets anywhere near matching us.

Beyond the physical venues, the UK punches way above its weight in terms of elite sporting success too. We rank in the top tier in virtually every main team and individual sport. This is great for national pride, and it is infectious.

*To inspire a new generation
of young people to take part
in physical activity.*

And, of course, when it comes to the Paralympics, our aspirations are sky-high. After all, Stoke Mandeville was the venue for the first international disability games. A ranking below second place is viewed as a disappointment. And we are rarely disappointed.

GB Olympic and Paralympic rankings and medal count since Beijing 2008

Olympics	GB Rank	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Beijing 2008	4	19	13	19	51
London 2012	3	29	17	19	65
Rio 2016	2	27	23	17	67
Tokyo 2020/21	4	22	20	22	64
Paris 2024	7	14	22	29	65

Paralympics	GB Rank	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Beijing 2008	2	42	29	31	102
London 2012	3	34	43	43	120
Rio 2016	2	64	39	44	147
Tokyo 2020/21	2	41	38	45	124
Paris 2024	2	49	44	31	124

Source: UK Sport

An inspired generation?

Not really. Despite the massive investment, this is a commitment where we have fallen short.

Although we may conclude that GB must be doing something right to be enjoying such successes in elite sport, it comes at a hefty cost. For example, UK Sport provided funding of more than £300 million for GB's Olympic and Paralympic campaigns for Paris 2024.

Yet, something can't be working properly as over 50% of children fail to meet the UK Chief Medical Officer's recommended amount of daily exercise of just one hour per day. Clearly, there is still a great deal to do to get anywhere near fixing this.



Over 100 walkers took part in the Annual Boost Sports Walk 2025 which started at the Olympic Velodrome. The UK can be justifiably proud of the sports venues and subsequent wider development at the Park but the country remains disappointingly inactive.

2. Enhancing the health of the nation

Data from the ONS reveals that GDP per capita in the UK has increased from £33,713 in 2005 to £37,044 in 2025 and life expectancy has risen from 79 years to 81 years. Yet, at the same time, the gulf between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has widened.

And the demographic shape of the nation has changed significantly too. The post-war baby boomers are now bulging out of the upper-age echelons of the population pyramid, whilst our younger generations are struggling to keep up with the required birth rate to maintain an even keel. If this carries on, which seems likely, the UK will soon be needing many fewer teachers, and many more care home nurses.

Meanwhile, during this period, obesity is up, disability is up, and mental ill-health is up – a lot. This is such a terrible shame, as evidence clearly demonstrates that people who embrace physical activity can expect to feel less anxious and enjoy greater levels of happiness.

It would be convenient to blame this on the Global Financial Crisis, Brexit, Covid and ever-present rises in the cost of living. However, the issue is more complicated than that. Yet, whatever the causes, the certain fact is that the UK is now carrying a significantly larger national health and welfare burden than it was in 2005.

From time to time Sport England publishes excellent big-picture reviews and targets to help us engage in more exercise and physical activity. Sport England's statement: 'If movement were a medicine, we would call it a miracle cure' is particularly brilliant. However, those in most need don't appear to be listening, or if they are, they are not acting on it. Otherwise, the data would look very different. For instance, the NHS indicates that almost one in ten children are obese at the time they start school. And the WHO has reported that UK men are the third fattest in Europe.

There is a disturbing ethnic and societal bias to the figures too. For instance, Black African and Caribbean children are most likely to be overweight. Getting the message across, though, is a challenge.

Allowing state schools to have the freedom to choose how much time/budget they allocate to teaching PE (recommended at least two hours per week), may or may not be having a negative effect, but either way, it is evident that swathes of vulnerable youngsters are being massively short-changed. They really do need to be engaged.

The table overleaf highlights some of the principal challenges.

*“If movement were a
medicine, we would call it a
miracle cure”*

Challenges, Pay-offs and National Recommendations

The Challenge	The Pay-off
• One in six deaths are caused by inactivity, equivalent to the number caused by the Covid pandemic. • 11.9 million adults (25.8%) do fewer than five minutes’ exercise a day. • 52.8% of children fail to do the recommended daily exercise. • At the age of 10–11 years old, 25.5% of children are obese and a further 15.4% are overweight. • People in lower socio-economic groups are most likely to be inactive.	• Active people live healthier, longer and happier lives. • Active lifestyles reduce the risk of disease and mental ill-health and reduce the burden on the NHS. • Active lifestyles are credited with 30 million fewer GP visits per annum and is worth £42 billion per annum. • Every year, active lifestyles prevent 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the UK’s main cause of death). • Sport reduces loneliness and builds friendships.

National Recommendations – UK Chief Medical Officer
• Adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary and do at least 150 minutes of moderate or intensive exercise per week (e.g. brisk walking and cycling).
• Children should do a minimum of one hour of sport/physical activity per day.
• Disabled children should do at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day.

Source: Sport England, Sheffield Hallam University

3. Funding elite sports

Does anyone have a clue how central and local government, the National Lottery, UK Sport and Sport England (Wales, Scotland & N. Ireland) fund sport? It must be one of the nation's better-kept secrets. Collectively, their contribution is huge. But is it successful?

It is an important question as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport tells us that the economic contribution of the UK sports sector in 2021 amounted to £99.6 billion, equivalent to 2.5% of the total UK output. And it supports approximately 1.25 million jobs. So, who pays for what?

Government

Local government's contribution is the largest. Local authorities in England and Wales spend about £1.4 billion a year on public sport, leisure, park services and green spaces, playgrounds, youth services, community halls and swimming pools.

This is a huge responsibility as three quarters of all grass roots sports clubs are dependent on affordable public leisure facilities and 72% of primary schools teach their children to swim in public pools. That's great. However, there is one major snag – Sport England estimates that 63% of main sports halls and 60% of swimming pools are now past their expected life span. An enormous bill is looming, which no doubt may have influenced the authorisation of the sale of yet another 279 school playing fields between 2010 and 2023.

Central government, via the Department for Education, provides the funding of PE and sport in schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant, which may be supplemented with additional Sports Premium Payments. Meanwhile, contributions are also made by the Departments for Health and Social Care, Transport and Defra. In respect of grant giving, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is significant as it provides funding alongside the National Lottery to UK Sport and Sport England.

National Lottery

Having paid out the prizes, lottery duty and the commission due to the retailers who sell the tickets, the National Lottery distributes the residual 25% to good causes. 40% of this is allocated to community sectors (charitable, health, education and the environment), 20% to the arts, 20% to national heritage and 20% to sport.

UK Sport

When it come to elite sport, UK Sport is the nation's high-performance sports agency whose mandate is to invest in Olympic and Paralympic sports. Their key pursuit is the delivery of gold, silver and bronze medals. It receives 23% of the National Lottery's allocation to sport which is supplemented by the Exchequer.

Beyond the four-year cycle of grants, the UK Sports Institute, which is a wholly

owned subsidiary, also provides support services for sports medicine, strength and conditioning, physiology, performance nutrition, sports psychology, biomechanics and talent identification.

Our world rankings and medal count would suggest that UK Sport does a decent job. Of the 20 biggest grant beneficiaries (more than £2 million each), only hockey, judo, modern pentathlon, badminton and archery failed to deliver a medal in Paris.

The story was even better for the Paralympics where only wheelchair rugby failed to bring home a medal from Paris. That would have been a disappointment to them as the team won gold in Tokyo.

When it comes to the Winter Olympics and Paralympics in 2026 in Italy, it is a different story altogether. Only seven of GB's Olympic sports (skiing/snowboarding, curling, skeleton, bobsleigh, skating, ice hockey and luge) receive any funding, totalling £22.76 million. And Paralympics GB receives just £6.77 million (para skiing/snowboarding and wheelchair curling). But there again, our medal expectations are low.

It may be brutal, but UK Sport's mandate is clear – no medals, no money!

Funding by UK Sport and GB medal tally at Paris Paralympics 2024

Paralympics	Funding £m	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Para Athletics	10	6	8	4	18
Para Cycling	8	9	8	5	22
Para Swimming	8	18	8	6	32
Wheelchair Basketball	5	0	1	0	1
Para Triathlon	4	2	1	2	5
Para Table Tennis	4	0	2	3	5
Boccia	4	1	0	0	1
Para Canoeing	4	4	4	0	8
Para Rowing	4	3	1	0	4
Para Equestrian	3	0	1	6	7
Para Archery	3	1	0	1	2
Wheelchair Rugby	3	0	0	0	0
Wheelchair Fencing	2	2	3	1	6
Powerlifting	2	0	2	1	3
Para Shooting	2	0	0	1	1
Para Badminton	1	0	2	0	2
VI Judo	1	0	1	1	2
Para Taekwondo	1	2	0	0	2
Sitting Volleyball	0.5	DNQ	0	0	0
Goalball	0.5	DNQ	0	0	0
15 x Others	9	1	2	0	3
Total	79	49	44	31	124

Source: UK Sport

4. Feeding grassroots sport

Sport England is the trading name for the English Sports Council. Its remit (also Sport Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) is quite different to UK Sport. It is responsible for growing and developing grassroots sport and getting more people active across the country. It receives its funding primarily from the National Lottery, but with some support from the Exchequer.

Since 2009, there have been 24,811 recipients (45,777 awards) of Sport England grants amounting to £4.93 billion. That is a lot of money! Where has it all been deployed?

The answer is that the majority has been allocated to the national sports governing bodies, like the FA and British Cycling, and local authorities. The top ten beneficiaries have enjoyed a whacking 29% of the total by value.

Perhaps that is fair. After all, it is the primary role of the national sports governing bodies to promote and develop their sports. But we also know that some are doing a noticeably better job than others.

At the other end of the scale, Sport England has also awarded more than 25,000 grants of up to £10,000 each. That is an awful lot of individual grant applications to process, which may explain why the organisation employs about 340 staff.

Top 10 beneficiaries of Sport England's grants

	Beneficiaries	Awards £m 2009 – 2025
1	Football Foundation	512
2	Football Association	144
3	British Cycling	125
4	Youth Sports Trust	110
5	Ecorys (Research & Impact)	107
6	All England Netball	103
7	Rugby Football Union	100
8	England & Wales Cricket	82
9	Rugby Football League	74
10	Badminton England	66
	Top 10 beneficiaries	1,423 (29%)

Source: Sport England, 360Giving

There is no escaping the fact that Sport England has an uphill task. In their April 2023 Assessment, they highlight:

- A quarter of the adult population is inactive.
- 53% of children and young people are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommended activity level of 60 minutes a day.
 - This figure rises to 60% for Black and Asian children.
 - Also, 60% of all girls fail to meet this baseline level.
- 55% of all adults in England have at least one 'inequality factor' relating to class, age, education, ethnicity, health and geography which prevents them from participating in sport and physical activity.
- One in five people in the UK have a long-standing limiting disability or illness.
- Racism in sport has still not gone away, and remains a deterrent to participation.

They have a big, big job. And remember they are fighting against a significant degree of poor education, poor nutrition, poor social care and poor mental health all of which are beyond their control.

Bearing this in mind, it is heartening that Sport England is amending its application process which hitherto has been so cumbersome.

However, they may like to reflect on their overuse of jargon too. To give just a flavour, its 2023-24 Accounts frequently refers to (in alphabetical order):

Active Design, Active Environments, Active Lives, Active Mums Start With You, Active Partnerships, Active Travel, Every Move, Every Move Environmental Strategy, Place Partnerships, Place Relationship Teams, Place Universal Package, Local Delivery Pilots, Making Your Comeback, Movement Fund (which replaces the Small Grants Programme), Moving To Inclusive Framework, Sports Survival Package, This Girl Can Campaign, Uniting the Movement Strategy, We Are Undefeatable Initiative.

Phew!

And adding what seems to be a further layer of confusion and duplication, the National Lottery Community Fund also awards grants to community-based sports programmes. The NLCF is an entirely separate entity to Sport England with its own independent team of scrutineers and managers. Where the demarcation lines between the two organisations are drawn is yet another mystery.

Notwithstanding any shortcomings that Sport England may have though, we should be forever grateful for John Major's moment of imagination and commitment. The National Lottery has been a godsend for sport in the UK.

5. Finding Boost’s Sweet Spot

Annual awards made by the leading grant-giving charities to sport

The Football Foundation	£119 million pa
Chance to Shine	£6.29 million pa
Laureus Sport for Good Foundation	£4.09 million pa
Lord’s Taverners	£3.84 million pa
Peter Hargreaves Foundation	£2.47 million pa
Peter Harrison Foundation	£1.53 million pa
Wooden Spoon	£1.31 million pa
Boost Charitable Trust 2024/25	£202,000 pa

Source: Charity Commission; 360Giving and the organisations’ most recent Financial Accounts

A quick glance at the list of big-hitting, grant-giving sports charities and foundations begs the question – what exactly is the point of Boost? Given its minnow status, how can it possibly be relevant? It’s a fair question. And the size disparity looks even more stark when Sport England’s massive annual contribution to grassroots sport is added into the equation.

Yet, somehow Boost does make a difference. And it has done since day one. Something frivolous, yet momentous, occurred in Beijing which helped to set the path for Boost. The Trust had agreed to back four outside-chance disability programmes in the build-up to the 2008 Paralympic Games – boccia, women’s wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby and a teenage swimmer with a limb deficiency, Louise Watkin. There is little doubt that the grants contributed to all four qualifying for the Games.

However, when the trustees were greeted in Beijing’s basketball stadium by the travelling parents and friends of the GB para-athletes, one of the dads shouted out: ‘Here comes the money’. Oh dear! Was this really what Boost stood for? Simply a source of funding? Surely there was more to grant-giving than that.

As it happened, GB Boccia won gold, and Louise won a silver and three bronze medals.

Since this harmlessly intended comment, Boost’s ambition has been to be the most engaging sports grant-giving charity, where both financial support and engagement is interlocked. This is Boost’s ‘sweet spot’.

Of course, there are some other key differentiators. Boost's portfolio of grants is:

- **More wide-ranging** than most. It embraces programmes in areas of extreme poverty and left-behind neighbourhoods, physical and learning disabilities, mental ill-health and social exclusion. Grants can also be awarded to exceptional projects deemed 'extraordinary and/or courageous'.
- **More open-minded** than most. There are no limitations on the type of sport/exercise programme or age groups. Nor is there a prohibition of funding to community interest companies or other social enterprise groups.
- **More inventive** than most. Some of the most successful funded programmes have been 'start-ups' or the development/growth of new adaptive sports.
- **Less tolerant of red tape** than most. Recognising that the programmes may have limited administrative support, there is no rigid application or tedious report form-filling.
- **More supportive** than most. Uniquely, all the programmes are regularly visited and there is no limitation on the renewal of grants.

The fact is that whilst there is plenty of money in the system, the sports sector in the UK is massively fragmented, and inefficient. So long as this remains the case, there will certainly be a role for the likes of Boost. It is just a case of constantly looking to where it can make the most difference.



14-year-old Louise Watkin (left) was awarded a scholarship to Mount Kelly College, Devon which was funded by Boost. Two years later she won a silver and three bronze medals at the Paralympics in Beijing 2008.

PART 2.

What are the underlying challenges?

Boost has supported hundreds of sports programmes over the past 20 years, both here in the UK and overseas. Many are adaptive sports for people with specific challenges or disabilities, and you may not have heard of some of them. Boccia, Frame Running, Goalball, Powerchair Football and Table Cricket immediately spring to mind.

One way or another all the participants are vulnerable. And, just like your local football or rugby club, all the programmes require management, leadership and volunteers to survive. And, of course, funding. Which is where Boost comes in.

But unlike the local football or rugby club, the activities are likely to be designed for smaller, highly focused groups where the participants need personal support. And here, we are not just talking about physical or learning disabilities but sports which address mental ill-health, financial hardship and people who are on the very edge of society such as ex-offenders, refugees, the homeless and drug or alcohol addicts.

The delivery of the sport itself is not the endgame. Rather, it is the means to make lives healthier, happier and more fulfilling. The next 13 essays offer insights into some of the worlds which, for most of us, are well below our normal radar.

6. Battling extreme poverty

According to the World Bank, there are a staggering 808 million people living below the \$3.00 per day poverty line in 2025. Natural disasters, the impact of climate change and, more recently, the pull-back from international aid programmes, are all adding to the hindrance of progress. Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), which borders South Africa and Mozambique, has a population of 1.23 million people, and has been a serious casualty of these challenges. Its GDP per capita is less than 10% of the UK's.

The country was massively hit by the global outbreak of HIV/Aids. According to the UN, the HIV rate is still over 25% and there are about 3,000 deaths each year from it. The consequence is a tragic number of orphans. In parallel, it has the unenviable position of being ranked eighth in the world in terms of accidental drownings. Life expectancy in the country is only 55 years. To compound their problems, the unemployment rate is a crippling 24.7%.

Kim Roques, founder of All Out Africa Foundation, has established nine neighbourhood care points (NCPs) and a thriving youth football and netball programme, in the Lobamba region. He says:

"The recent withdrawal of international aid is having serious consequences in Eswatini, particularly for those vulnerable communities which rely on donor-funded services. As an NGO working on the ground, we've seen critical programmes in health, education, food security, and conservation scaled back or shut down entirely. This is not only affecting access to essential services but it is having a negative impact on local jobs and skills development. The reality is that without continued international support, many of the development gains we have made over recent years will be at risk of being reversed."

"Our NCPs support about three hundred vulnerable children, many of whom have lost one or both of their parents and who are cared for by their grandparents, or other wider family members. We provide them with a daily meal and early-stage education. Organised playground activities form an integral part of the daily curriculum too. Above all though, we offer what every child deserves ... a safe, nurturing environment."

"We have also set up football and netball leagues for over six hundred older children who live in the region. Given such harsh economic circumstances, it is obvious that we need to find ways to promote their physical health. Moreover, we find that our sports activities help sponsor personal confidence and leadership skills, as well as teamwork, positive social engagement and a strong sense of community and belonging."

"Bandzile first attended one of our NCPs when he was just four years old. He says that without the protection of the NCP, and the purpose that team sport has given him, he would almost certainly have chosen the wrong path. He said that apart



Eswatini remains dogged by high levels of HIV. According to the World Food Programme, one in four children has lost one or both parents. Organised sport offers them at least some relief.

from the teaching, he would always remember the games activities. He now plays in the local Under 15 football league and loves it. He says that he has learned discipline, teamwork, and to achieve something in life, you have to stay focused. One of his duties is to clear the cows off the playing area before the games begin and help set up the field markings."

Nozipho Mahlalela, Secretary General, Eswatini Swimming Association adds:

"We aim to instil the same positive personal characteristics from our programmes, but our sporting focus is on swimming. Temperatures here can reach as high as 45 degrees, so it is no surprise that everyone goes to the rivers and dams to cool off. The trouble is that they are dangerous places, as so few kids can swim. Maybe 20 of them will head off together, with one acting as look-out for crocodiles. There was a situation last year (not in our region – I would add) when one 11-year-old was bitten by a crocodile, but because he couldn't swim, he drowned.

"Other than in private schools, swimming pools in Eswatini tend to be owned by large companies who may or may not make them available to their resident employees and their families. Even if they do, they will rarely provide a lifeguard or swimming coach. Which is why our Boost-funded free swimming classes are so important."

No-one wants to rely on (international) aid, do they? Certainly not Eswatini. It is such a beautiful country, but the situation is as it is. They have been dealt a miserable hand. So, until the country can discover a way to become sustainable in its own right and stop losing so many lives prematurely, they will continue to need a supportive leg-up.

Kim Roques

Founder

All Out Africa Foundation

www.alloutafrica.org

Nozipho Mahlalela

Secretary General

Eswatini Swimming Association

eswatiniswimming.com

7. Revitalising left-behind places

The UK is the sixth wealthiest country in the world with free healthcare, a supportive welfare system and a minimum wage. Yet, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 3.8 million people cannot afford the basic needs to keep themselves warm, dry, clean and fed.

As a result, nearly three thousand local foodbanks are required across the country. By any measure this is a national disgrace.

Huge pockets of deprived and 'left-behind' neighbourhoods compound the problem. They foster social unrest and despair. Despite its spectacularly beautiful countryside, parts of the Rhondda Valley in South Wales, fall into this unenviable category. Starkly, 27% of 16 to 64-year-olds in the Rhondda are economically inactive. Surely this is unsustainable.

Jody Barnes runs the Rhondda Netball club, which is one of, if not the most, joyous sports clubs in the UK. She says:

"Before we launched Rhondda Netball in 2016, there were so few opportunities for girls and women to participate locally in sport. Frankly, they seemed to be largely relegated to making the match-day teas at the local men's rugby and football clubs. With limited opportunities in the area, many girls grow up without seeing pathways to ambitious or fulfilling careers.

"Our aim has always been to have a community-oriented club that would not only coach netball, but improve our members' physical and mental wellness, promote opportunities for them, and help correct the glaring gender inequality in the Valleys. We now have over 900 passionate schoolgirls, mums and grand mums playing netball regularly.

"And who prepares the men's match-day teas nowadays? I really don't know!

"Importantly, 30 girls have now graduated through the club's coaching/leaders' programme. This entails passing two coaching courses, first aid training, DBS, and mental health and awareness training. They have become role models and whilst many of the girls will inevitably choose to continue to live within the family friendly 'Rhondda Bubble', the girls' new-found confidence and record-breaking school examinations, now makes university entry (or equivalent) a real possibility.

"Take Ashleigh, for example – she was always a talker, but sport helped her truly come into her own. She found her confidence, found her voice (even louder now!), and ended up joining the police force. Trust me, you wouldn't want to step out of line on her watch!

"And Taylar, who, as a child was brought up in Penrhys. Living with her grandparents in an area of Rhondda where poverty and crime were rife, Taylar tragically lost her mum to alcohol abuse and Rhondda Netball played a big part in becoming a safe space for her! She has now been the Head Coach at Ferndale

Netball Club for over three years impacting hundreds of girls from the same area she once grew up in. She is such a brilliant role model!

"Can the Rhondda Valley break out of its economic blight? I hope so. Whatever – we, at Rhondda Netball, will certainly do our bit to help."

Jody Barnes

Operations Manager

Rhondda Netball

www.rhonddanetball.com



Whilst they are making massive strides towards correcting the gender inequality in the Valleys and setting a supportive platform for the girls to advance their futures, the key thing that stands out most about Rhondda Netball is their sheer joy.

8. Engaging with disabilities

According to the government, one in five of the UK population has some form of physical, medical or mental disability. And, whilst London 2012 massively increased public awareness of Paralympic sport, disabled people still struggle to access inclusive sports facilities and programmes.

Nearly half of Boost's funding has been directed towards disability sport. This list of impairments faced by the funded programmes may explain why:

Amputeeism, Angelman Syndrome, Anxiety, Apical Ventricular Septal Defect, Arid 1b Syndrome, Asthma, Asperger's Syndrome, Attachment Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Brain injury.

Cerebral Palsy, Charge Syndrome, Chiari Malformation with Cyrix, Chronic Encephalopathy of unknown cause, Chronic wide-spread pain, COL4A1 Mutation, Complete agenesis of corpus callosum, Congenital Myasthenic Syndrome, Congenital Toxoplasmosis, Congestive Heart Disease, Cryptogenic West Syndrome.

Damage in the Visual Cortex Area, Dandy Walker Syndrome, Deafness, Depression, Diabetes, Disorganised Breathing Pattern, Down Syndrome, Dyskinesia, Dyspraxia.

Emotional Behaviour, Emotional Disturbance, Epilepsy, Epileptic Encephalopathy, Factor V Leiden, Fragile X Syndrome, Functional Neurological Disorder.

Global Developmental Delay, Hashimoto's, Heart Defects, Heart Transplant, Hemiplegia, Hydrocephalus, Hyper mobility, Jacobsen Syndrome, Learning Disability, Leighs Disease.

Mental Health, Metachromatic Leukodystrophy, Microcephaly, Missing Chromosome 15, MPPH Syndrome, Muscle Wasting Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Atrophy, Muscular Dystrophy, Non-verbal (including elective mutism), Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Pallister Killian Syndrome, Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome, PEG fed, Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, Physical Impairment (non-specified), Pica Behaviour, Polymicrogyria (brain disorder), Prada Willi Syndrome, Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities.

Respiratory problems, Rett Syndrome, Risk of Early Onset Dementia, Scoliosis and other spinal conditions, Sensory Processing Disorder, Smith Lemli-Opitz Syndrome, Speech or language impairment, Spina Bifida, Spinal Injury, Stroke, Tourette's, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment and Blindness.

If there are any lingering doubts about the uplifting qualities of sports and exercise for the disabled, words regularly used by the leaders of Boost's funded programmes such as joy, life-changing, and life-saving should be explanation enough. Even so, it is still rather disheartening that the sector continues to need huge dollops of supportive funding just to survive.

9. Confronting disability with humour

Richard Allcroft OBE is a former Royal Navy submariner. He was appointed President of World Wheelchair Rugby in 2018 and a trustee of Boost in 2025. He certainly understands the challenges of disabled athletes as he paid a heavy price himself for larking around – he suffered a spinal cord injury which left him wheelchair bound. But he is still smiling.

“How did I go from being a submariner in the Royal Navy to being the president of a Paralympic federation, and responsible for wheelchair rugby globally? Trust me, I have asked that question many times.

“It started with a life changing moment as I ran into Loch Lomond after having downed several drinks. It was July 1992. It was in Scotland. And it was not very warm. So, why was I naked? It turns out that I am not invincible and seconds later, I had suffered a spinal cord injury. I didn’t know it at the time but as my bare pink bottom stuck out of the water, my friends (of whom several were A&E nurses) thought I was joking around. Luckily, whilst I was gasping for breath under water, my friends realised the problem and pulled me out. I was whisked away in an ambulance at high speed.

“I often tell the story with humour, although nine months of rehabilitation in both the Glasgow and Sheffield spinal injuries centres sorely put it to the test. In the Navy, we were always told ‘Never lose your sense of humour’.

“Straight after my injury, I had no movement at all. After a few weeks I started to get small movements back in my arms, and yet it was obvious that my recovery was going to take months, if not years.

“Every day brought new challenges. I couldn’t stop wondering how I would cope at the supermarket for the first time, how people would see me, how was I going to get things off the shelves and how was I going to pay for it. Simple tasks, like getting my wallet and credit card out. I needed to find new ways to do even the simplest things that only a year previously I had taken for granted.

“I needed a new focus. Along came wheelchair rugby, and more importantly the people who played it; individuals who had also experienced life after their trauma, and others with disabilities that were acquired through diseases or from birth. This was my first real exposure to people who were less able.

“Government initiatives were starting to be provided to help disabled people overcome barriers to get back into work. The ‘Access to Work’ scheme was created in 1994. Government funding, legal frameworks, and specific support services were developed to enable disabled students to have equal access to education. But through the spinal injury centre, sport was more readily available. And it appealed to me.

"As the people I met shared their stories and encouraged me to train with them, my rehabilitation progressed so much quicker – by several months, if not years.

"Whilst my current role is about sport globally, it was Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby that exposed me to my next challenge. I had been playing the sport for several years and I loved it; I was even travelling abroad (although I had to pay for it myself). Access to public sporting venues could be costly and so, being able to use discounted facilities such as the Sheffield Wheelchair Sports Club or Stoke Mandeville and the Guttman Sports Centre (the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement), really helped.

"UK Sport, which had only recently been formed, was investing in Paralympic sport and, as wheelchair rugby had been chosen as a medal event at Sydney 2000, their money-for-medal approach certainly benefitted the elite end of the sport. On the other hand, grassroots clubs had very little money. It was the players, their families and often the volunteers who were funding the growth of the sport.

"I volunteered to be the secretary of GBWR and started seeking sources of funding to develop the National League and Championship. I worked with Coloplast, a large medical company as a sponsor, and used the government's Gift Aid scheme. This was my first introduction to Sport England, whose 'Sports Match' scheme provided £1 for every £1 of sponsorship.

"In 2005, the biggest opportunity came along with London being awarded the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. As a side note, this was also the moment when I stopped playing. I left my rugby chair in a gym in Nottingham and never saw it again. I was always amazed that I didn't miss playing as much as I thought I would. My shoulders, elbows and wrists used to ache after training and part of me knew it was time to stop before it got more serious. With the additional time on my hands, I was asking the question 'is wheelchair rugby ready for the biggest sporting event in the world?'

"Our organisation needed to professionalise, and I started working on GBWR's governance. Funding from Boost helped develop our officials and engage our first CEO. Not all of this was immediately successful, but lessons were learnt along the way. When I got the opportunity to meet with Sport England about something called the 'Whole Sport Plan' I knew I needed to make it successful. What was



Having spent more than ten years 'professionalising' their governance, administration, coaching and training, GB Wheelchair Rugby won the gold medal in the postponed Tokyo Paralympic Games 2020.

being relayed to us felt like the most complex funding application ever created. However, it is fair to say that the funding we received was one of the biggest catalysts for success that GBWR has ever seen. It enabled the organisation to bring in personnel who could be salaried and whose sole focus was on professionalising our governing body, and the sport in the UK.

"The answer to my question about whether we would be ready for London 2012 was answered three or four years later when the number of clubs nationally had grown from seven to 25. I had never imagined that.

"So, what about internationally? Of course, the sport has seen growth since its inception in the mid-1980s. It is faster, the wheelchairs are bespoke and lighter, there is an international calendar of events and wheelchair rugby continues to be a Paralympic sport. And yet, when I became president in 2018, I knew I had a tough challenge ahead. Wheelchair rugby is now played in about 30 countries, and we should see this grow to nearer 40 in the wake of the Paris 2024 Games. However, except for a very few nations, there are still serious challenges to overcome – funding, social inclusion, disability awareness and government funding into social and health care. The UK may not be getting everything right but there is still much to be thankful for here, not least for our approach to disability and disability sport.

"For sport to really make the difference, leadership needs to ensure that the prolific amount of money that flows into sporting international organisations finds its way to what is important – the athletes. I would also add, that in the Paralympic Movement, it is also the volunteers that would benefit from well-funded projects.

"World Wheelchair Rugby operates on a shoestring. Our total annual budget is barely £100,000. However, we are doing the best we can. We all know though that if we had the right level of funding, so much more could be done."

Richard Allcroft OBE

President

World Wheelchair Rugby

www.worldwheelchair.rugby

"The UK may not be getting everything right but there is still much to be thankful for here, not least for our approach to disability and disability sport."

10. Picturing the past 20 years

Boost has provided the seed, second stage or long-term funding for hundreds of sports initiatives which have delivered great outcomes. Here is a photographic essay of some of the inspiring programmes which have helped shape the direction of the charity over the past 20 years.

Extreme poverty and 'left behind' neighbourhoods



Ahoy Centre | After-school sailing in hard-pressed Deptford
www.ahoy.org.uk



Eswatini Swimming | Swimming lessons to prevent vulnerable children from drowning
eswatiniswimming.com



Loughborough University | Rugby coaching & exchange programme with the West Indies



Hackney Bumps | Introductory skateboarding lessons for children in East London
www.hackneybumps.co.uk

Physical and learning disabilities



Allsorts | Dancing, swimming & trampolining for severely impaired children in Stroud, Gloucestershire
www.allsortsglos.org.uk



Belvoir Education & Sports Trust | Table cricket for children with special needs
www.support-best.org



CP Sport | Successful roll-out of Frame Running to secure Paralympic sport status
www.cpsport.org



Butler Golf Academy | Family-orientated disability golf centre in Dudley, West Midlands
www.themarkbutlergolfacademy.co.uk



Power 2 Inspire | East of England multi-sports initiative which brings able and disabled people together
www.power2inspire.org.uk



Tadcaster Swimming | Inspirational swimming club for individuals with learning disabilities
www.tadcasterpool.org.uk



Boccia UK | Nationwide roll-out of a sport designed predominantly for people with cerebral palsy
www.boccia.uk.com



GB Wheelchair Basketball | Paralympic qualification for the GB women's team
www.britishwheelchairbasketball.co.uk



Gym Possible | Personal exercise training for individuals with life-changing injuries and disabilities
www.gympossible.co.uk



South Shields Surf | Adaptive surfing (even in the most inclement weather)
www.southshieldsurf.co.uk

Mental Health & Self-Confidence



*Get Set 4 Tennis | Tennis focused on physical disability and the mental health of children in Buckinghamshire
clubspark.lta.org.uk/getset4tennis*



*Advantage! Raider Braves & Girls | Rugby League for children lacking in self-confidence
www.advantagebarrow.com*

Social Exclusion



*The Harbour Project | Saturday football for asylum seekers and refugees in Swindon
www.harbourproject.org.uk*

11. Transforming the lives of blind people

A survey by the National Institutes of Health indicates that blindness is feared by a greater proportion of individuals than cancer or paralysis. Yet Liverpool comedian, Chris McCausland, who progressively lost his sight from retinitis pigmentosa in his twenties and thirties, has shown the power of the possible. He won the 2024 edition of *Strictly Come Dancing*.

According to the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) there are two million people in the UK who live with some degree of sight-loss which is severe enough to significantly impact their daily lives. Of these, around 340,000 people are registered blind or partially sighted. And this figure is increasing. Whilst the main cause of blindness (80%) is age-related macular degeneration, diabetes is the leading cause of preventable sight loss, and the principal cause of Type 2 diabetes is obesity.

The RNIB suggests that an individual's response to losing their sight is like grief – firstly shock, denial and anger; then helplessness, fear and anxiety; then sadness; followed by depression; and finally, loss of identity.

Mark Butler, the founder and leading professional at an inclusive golfing academy near Dudley, in the West Midlands, coaches blind and visually impaired players. He says:

"When they first arrive here, they are nervous, almost like a child learning to walk. They start by using feel. They feel where the mat is, where the tee is, where the ball is. One guy used to be an active golfer but then lost his sight and never believed he would be able to play again. They usually become reclusive with a lack of life, energy and spirit. We build them back up. If they have been blind all their life, they may be a bit more confident.

"Once they have settled in, they gain more confidence. There is a sense of normality with more character, confidence and freedom. They develop a new community. One of our longer standing members, Barney, gave a speech recently. He said that, with no communication with people and alone in his flat, he had been suicidal. Now he's a bundle of joy and comes to the club every Friday. They then all go out together to the pub. Confidence spreads to the rest of their lives."

Rebecca Gibson is the Foundation Director of Love Rowing. She spoke to Alex who is a member of the programme at Peterborough Rowing Club, whose story leaves little to the imagination.

"I'm in my 50s and was very late-diagnosed autistic. I also have a rare neurological condition that impacts my ability to see. It started in November 2019 with more

rapid blinking and, by the time everyone else was going into Covid lockdown, I was entering my own sort of personal lockdown. I couldn't keep my eyes open.

"I had been at the University in Cambridge doing postgrad studies and learned to row there. I fell in love with the sport. There was something about the rhythm that soothed my autistic need for rocking.

"But when I had to give it up, I lost my whole world. I was so isolated, living in the middle of nowhere and unable to drive.

"When I discovered the Row the Rhythm programme, the sheer joy of getting back on the water after four and a half years was amazing. Assisted only by a headset and a coach on the bank who can guide your direction was like being set free from a cage. It is giving me so much more now than just exercise and friends, it is life-affirming and I'm not exaggerating when I say life-saving.

"When you lose your ability to see you lose the largest part of your connection with your surroundings. It messes with your balance too. Just try standing on one leg with your eyes shut if you don't believe me!

"Your connection with the world shrinks to the size of your feet and if, like me, you are only a size 3, that connection is very small indeed. But then, when you get in a boat, your connection expands so much more than I had ever realised when I was a fully sighted rower. You are connected to the boat through your feet, your hands and your seat, which instantly triples your connection. But then there is the fact that the blades of the oars are so far from the boat that you suddenly have this huge connection to the horizontal and to the water, both in front and back and out to the sides. That is so incredibly freeing and comforting. When you add to that the speed and you feel the wind and hear the gentle sound of the water, you feel like you are in heaven.

"I don't know how I would survive without it now."

Mark Butler

Founder, PGA Professional
The Mark Butler Golf Academy

www.themarkbutlergolfacademy.co.uk

Rebecca Gibson

Foundation Director
Love Rowing

www.loverowing.org



Love Rowing's Row the Rhythm programme in Peterborough for the blind and visually impaired is described by one of its participants as life-affirming and life-saving!

12. Racing against the deadly timeline of Muscular Dystrophy

Muscular Dystrophy UK advises that only about 100 boys in the UK are born with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy each year and there may be only 2,500 sufferers at any one time. But that number increases significantly to about 110,000 when other related forms of Muscular Dystrophy are included. Life expectancy is between 21 and 40 years.

Muscular Dystrophy is genetic and currently there is no cure. It is a muscle-wasting condition which normally becomes apparent at about four years old and it almost exclusively affects boys. Ultimately, the disease attacks the breathing muscles and the heart.

Whilst Powerchair Football (power soccer) was first invented in France in the 1970s, it only caught on in the UK with the establishment of the Wheelchair Football Association (WFA) in 2005. The wheelchairs are battery powered, they are extremely rapid, and they are controlled by a hyper-sensitive joystick. And, whilst the sport is ideal for sufferers of Muscular Dystrophy and other conditions with limited physical agility (such as cerebral palsy), the chairs are expensive. But the pay-off in smiles is huge.

Boost's commitment, in 2017, to funding the growth of the sport was prompted by the untimely death of Sam Sananes at the age of 39. He was a close friend of Boost, and he was an active fund raiser for Muscular Dystrophy UK.

Ryan Sipple, National Development Officer at the WFA says:

"Powerchair Football is now one of the most popular sports among individuals with Muscular Dystrophy, alongside boccia. While neither of these sports offers a cure, what they do offer – and what Powerchair Football delivers in abundance – is enjoyment, excitement, and a powerful sense of community. For some, it may even lead to representing their country on the international stage.

"However, we are always aware of the tough realities that accompany progressive conditions – a stark reminder of why our work matters.

"For many of our players, time is precious. And so, our commitment is clear: to keep building, keep expanding, and keep the sport moving forward"

"At the WFA, our mission is to make the sport as accessible, sustainable, and widespread as possible. That means ensuring clubs can reliably support at least eight players – enough for regular four-a-side games – week in, week out. But that isn't always easy. Many players currently travel 50 miles or more to reach their nearest club. That's why continued growth is so important.

"For many of our players, time is precious. And so, our commitment is clear: to keep building, keep expanding, and keep the sport moving forward. With a fair wind, we will increase the number of clubs by 40% over the next three years. If we can, that will mean we will have 50 clubs across the country with 725 players. That would be a massive result!"

Sam would have been proud of that.

Ryan Sipple

National Development Officer
The Wheelchair Football Association

www.thewfa.org.uk



Muscular Dystrophy is a life-limiting, genetic muscle-wasting disease, which makes the speedy roll-out of Powerchair Football across the country so important.

13. Getting to grips with Parkinson's

Parkinson's is a chronic, progressive, neurological condition which affects 166,000 people in the UK. Whilst the popular perception is that it only affects older people, about 40% of people living with Parkinson's are of working age. It is caused by the loss of nerve cells in the part of the brain (substantia nigra) which produces dopamine – the messenger between the brain and the nervous system. Whilst Parkinson's won't be the direct cause of death, it is likely to shorten life expectancy – invariably through infections and falls.

We don't know yet why people get Parkinson's and currently there is no cure. Traditionally the symptoms have been treated with medication, physiotherapy and speech therapy. However, there is a growing appreciation that exercise can alleviate some symptoms and research is suggesting that high intensity exercise potentially has modifying effects.

In 2018, Parkinson's UK picked up on the potential benefits of (especially aerobic) exercise. From a near standing start, they have now established 274 groups nationwide which are engaged in 70 different sports and exercises – in 950 weekly activities. And, on average, there are 15 participants at each activity. That is very good going indeed!

What the experts don't yet know though is which exercises deliver the most productive returns for which stages of the condition – for instance, table tennis, exercise drumming or walking football. Whilst highly intensive exercise shows the most promising results, that is an improbable solution for most people living with Parkinson's.

Caroline Russell and Anna Castiaux of Parkinson's UK who are responsible for the initiative say:

- *Exercise, in managing Parkinson's, is proving to be at least as important as medication, particularly at the start of the journey.*
- *We know for sure that exercise offers some relief and, we believe, it may even slow the progression of the condition. However, we need more research to be able to say this definitively.*
- *We now want to extend our reach into more rural and marginalised communities.*
- *The whole Parkinson's Community has got behind this exciting initiative because it is working.*

“Exercise, in managing Parkinson's, is proving to be at least as important as medication, particularly at the start of the journey.”

- *One of our aims is to foster new friendships within the Parkinson's Community and exercise is now proving to be an integral part of this programme.*
- *Most importantly, it offers hope.*

Movement, relief, friendships and hope, Now, that really is a terrific combination.

Caroline Russell

CEO

Parkinson's UK

Anna Castiaux

Physical Activity Programme Lead

Parkinson's UK

www.parkinsons.org.uk



A growing appreciation that exercise, including exercise drumming, can alleviate some of the symptoms of Parkinson's has been the principal driver of the launch and roll-out of the nationwide Physical Activity Programme.

14. Overcoming mental ill-health

Neil Harris established Sport in Mind in 2010. It is now the leading mental health sports charity in England and Wales. The charity's success was recognised in 2019 with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

"When my childhood friend, Jamie, had a breakdown in 2009, I was shocked by the stigma surrounding mental health and the inaccessibility of traditional mental health services. So, to support my friend's recovery, I designed a physical activity programme orientated around the evidence-based behavioural therapy – desensitisation. Inspired by the programme's success, I set up Sport in Mind to help others who were also struggling with their mental health. That was 15 years ago, and whilst the public's understanding of mental health has improved somewhat since then, sadly, misinformation and misconceptions still exist.

"The uncomfortable reality is that mental health problems will impact most of us here in the UK sometime during our lifetime, either directly or indirectly. We're talking about conditions such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-natal depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia and seasonal affective disorder. These conditions affect people in all walks of life, gender identities, occupations and ages. They are indiscriminate.

"The uncomfortable reality is that mental health problems will impact most of us here in the UK sometime during our lifetime, either directly or indirectly."

"Evidence demonstrates that physical activity is highly beneficial for our mental health as it reduces the level of stress hormones and stimulates the production of endorphins, which are natural mood lifters and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, physical activity increases the release of serotonin and dopamine, the body's happiness hormones, which help enhance mood and well-being. A 2018 study by Yale and the University of Oxford, which analysed data of 1.2 million Americans, emphatically concluded that sport improves mental health.

"Distressingly, mental health problems are on the rise, with five million people accessing mental health services in England in 2023, a 33% increase since 2019. Everyone knows that the NHS is struggling to cope. 'Social Prescribing', which was launched in 2019, is helping. It involves health professionals (GPs) referring patients to non-clinical services like Sport in Mind (sport, dance, walking and gardening). The basic thesis is for us to complement the clinical services. Some of our referred patients may only need a 'social' prescription type of service whilst others may need a combination of the two. Most of our work is with the latter.

"Sport in Mind now receives thousands of 'social' referrals a year. Yet, surprise, surprise, we don't receive any funding out of the social prescription pot. It all goes to the NHS for staff who just love prescribing people to services like ours! Of course, they do!"

"On top of that, every time we set up new sessions, such as tai chi in Bracknell, we are inundated with requests to replicate it elsewhere. While social prescription is transformative, it comes with hefty organisational, and financial challenges. Since starting our work, Sport in Mind has supported the recovery of 31,000 people and we naturally want to respond to all the demand for our services. We need to be realistic, though. As things stand, we simply don't have the resources to do so."

"This is doubly frustrating as we know that our programmes can empower individuals back into the workforce. From a national standpoint, this is crucial as the direct and indirect costs of mental health problems supposedly now amount to nearly £118 billion – 5% of the national GDP."

"Oh! By the way – Jamie made a full recovery."

Neil Harris

Founder and CEO

Sport in Mind

www.sportinmind.org



Physical activity increases the release of serotonin and dopamine, the body's happiness hormones, which help enhance mood and wellbeing. As a result, Sport in Mind's programmes can often empower individuals back into the workforce.

15. Building self-confidence

Barrow-in-Furness is a tough northern manufacturing town. And Barrow Raiders is a tough, no nonsense rugby league club. And yet, despite its earthy image, the club has a more gentle thread too.

Barrow Raiders is a classic community club where its first team players (such as Josh Wood, Charlie Emslie and Brett Carter) are seen as role models, as is Emily Stirzaker, the women's team captain. Bolder school kids will talk about them in their playgrounds. The more reserved kids will be ... well, more reserved. Which is why the club launched the Advantage! Raider Braves and Raider Girls programmes. They are both designed to welcome children who may be being bullied at school or simply lack the self-confidence to push themselves forward. The care and thoughtfulness shown by the coaches is heart-warming. And it pays massive dividends to the kids.

And here's another example, in Swindon.

It is generally understood that fencing requires physical speed, agility, explosive power, anaerobic endurance and balance.

Less understood though are the sport's attributes which improve self-confidence, especially in children and young people. And here we are talking about:

- Intense concentration and emotional control.
- Quick thinking and reaction under pressure.
- Strategic thinking especially in anticipating the opponent's next move.
- Weighing up when to wait, attack or defend.
- Coming to terms with the fact that fencing is an individual sport and there is no hiding place.

Does this confidence transfer into their regular lives? Neil Bromley, coach at Swindon Fencing Club, thinks so:

"Sword fencing changes young people's lives. It is the ultimate leveller where focus and mental agility outplays physical strength. Few children have heard of the sport, let alone tried it. But when they do, and they put on their masks and protective jackets, they soon discover that they can invariably outshine their more outgoing peers. It promotes individuality and mental resilience.

"Fencing is like no other sport because it demands a serious physical work-out through high intensity movement."

"I like to describe it as bringing out the 'Inner-Jedi' in our young participants. Fencing is like no other sport because it demands a serious physical work-out through high intensity movement, all the time thinking how best to strike their

opponent without being hit themselves. It is physically and mentally exhausting.

"Through their participation in the sport, children and young people become more confident, and certainly more vocal in the classroom. They actively want to offer answers and contribute to discussions, when previously they would have been the last to put up their hand."

"Phoebe, who is not conventionally sporty, was introduced to fencing two years ago. Naturally quiet and slightly introverted, fencing has helped her grow in confidence and self-belief. This is visible in her ability to cope with setbacks. The tantrums and tears of her early days when she lost a bout have now been replaced by a more methodical, rational method of assessing how it could have gone better."

"Her improved self-confidence has also translated into her academic lessons. Most joyfully, she has made many new friends too."

"Rufus started fencing just under three years ago, not long after he was formally diagnosed with autism. The one-to-one nature of the sport has turned out to be perfect for him. Whilst a high-functioning and intelligent child, he struggled with team sports and the more social aspects of the traditional school playing field. And yet, he quickly found that fencing is something that he can concentrate on and develop. More than that, he loves winning medals."

"The positive improvement in both Phoebe's and Rufus's self-confidence has been heart-warming. But perhaps even more rewarding is that they both now mentor, coach and develop younger participants at the club. Surely, being elevated from pupil to master is one of the greatest testaments to success."

Neil Bromley

Community and Development Coach
Swindon Fencing Club

www.swindonfencing.org.uk

These are examples of two very different sports but with very similar outcomes.



Fencing is one of only a few sports where David can take on Goliath on equal terms. It requires quick thinking under pressure and emotional control rather than brute force.

16. Developing friendships

Sport England constantly reinforces the point that sport can be a valuable catalyst for reducing loneliness and forging new friendships. Duncan Christie-Miller is a former Royal Marine and co-founder of the Boost/Aspire Sport and Business Management Programme. He also founded the Pilam Ferio Golf Society with the principal aim of developing friendships through sport.

"Chess was recognised as a sport by the International Olympic Committee in 1999. At the time, I was rather surprised. Upon reflection though, I came to understand the IOC's thinking. Chess is competitive. Like golf, it can be both an individual and a team-based game. And it demands significant mental toughness. Plus, there is physical 'positioning' and a large degree of psychological engagement.

"When I was asked to contribute an essay about Friendship and Sport, these characteristics immediately came to mind. It is widely acknowledged that sport fosters friendship, as well as competitiveness and rivalry. It often promotes shared happiness, shared objectives and banter. Above all, it is fun. That said, I understand that the definition of fun is unique to each participant. For instance, who would think that running a marathon or tearing down the Cresta Run at lightning speed could be fun? But many do.

"An often-overlooked attribute though is compassion."

"Sport has been a significant part of my life. So too has the military. And the quest for friendships has been a fundamental aspect of so many of my actions. I suspect that many readers will share this combination of behaviours, attributes and attitudes.

"Firstly, let's look at the relationship between sport and the military. In combat there is an enemy – not always clearly defined but believe me, when you are at the sharp end, it is not too hard to spot the unfriendly one! To operate successfully as a team you need sustained comradeship, mutual support, mutual understanding, empathy and what one might call 'tough love'. Having a clear objective is essential. It is motivating and inspiring. Above all, recognition that you are fighting for a worthy and positive result (which is greater than you and your immediate team) is paramount. Without this, morale swiftly crumbles.

"The sports within the ancient Olympic Games were all based on military activities, such as running, jumping, archery, horse riding, wrestling, and throwing a javelin or discus. The need to be able to overpower your enemy/opponent are, in so many ways, the same in modern sport.

"An often-overlooked attribute though is compassion. There are many examples of immediate post-conflict acts of kindness and care. Indeed, the Geneva Convention sets the rules for the treatment of prisoners-of-war. And in sport, remember how



As an example, Paddlers for Life supports women in remission from breast cancer. Seemingly, the downward paddling action is good for rehabilitation. Above all though, the programme fosters shared experiences, fellowship and friendships.

Andrew Flintoff consoled Brett Lee, the Australian fast bowler, after a last gasp English win in the 2005 Ashes series. Pilots Douglas Bader and Adolf Galland became firm post-WW2 friends – having tried to eliminate each other during the conflict. You see, they had much in common. They had mutual respect.

"To be an effective soldier, you need to be fit and strong. Stamina and the ability to operate under high stress levels are pre-requisite. Periods of rest and recuperation are essential. Sport is the same. Both release endorphins in the brain and body which generate a sense of pleasure and thus encourages repetition.

"How does friendship feature in this matrix? As tribal and sociable animals, we need the company and support of other people. Loneliness is at the opposite end of the spectrum to friendship. Sports and military teams work together, play together, socialise together and bond together. When these fail, or are diminished, the team, or unit, under performs. When successful, the team is happy. Shared laughter, personal familiarity, in-team jokes plus a common, but often unspoken sensation of 'us against them', all make for both individual and collective happiness.

"Of course, everyone needs to find their own individual route to happiness which may, or may not, involve playing a physically demanding sport or signing up to the military. But it would be good to remember that sport comes in many varied and different formats, including chess!"

Duncan Christie-Miller

Founder

Duncan Christie-Miller Ltd

www.duncanchristiemiller.co.uk

17. Accommodating homelessness and asylum seeking

According to government statistics, on 31 March 2025, there were 83,150 families and a further 47,990 individuals living in temporary accommodation in England. Effectively, that means hotels, hostels or bed & breakfast units. This is unsustainable.

Here are two very personal stories which may influence your thinking on the issue. Firstly, Claude Umuhire:

"I came to the UK as a child after surviving the Rwandan genocide, but as I got older, things started to unravel. I dropped out of university, lost direction, and eventually ended up homeless; sofa-surfing at first, then sleeping rough on the streets.

"When you're in that dire a situation, you lose more than just a place to stay; you lose self-confidence, structure, and any sense of who you are. I was really struggling with my mental health. I didn't know where to turn.

"When I first connected with the team at The Running Charity through a youth centre, they invited me to join their running sessions. I wasn't convinced at first. Running felt like the last thing I needed. But I gave it a try. That decision changed everything. With every session, they helped me rebuild my confidence. I re-found structure and consistency, but most of all, I found people who genuinely believed in me. Over time, I got back on my feet; sorted my housing and found work.

"I am now The Running Charity's Programmes Manager. And that has been the most meaningful part of my journey. I lead sessions across London, working with vulnerable 16 to 25 year-old kids who are facing many of the same challenges I went through – homelessness, trauma, exclusion, and instability. Coaching is about so much more than just running. It's about building trust, creating space where young people can feel seen, and helping them realise their potential."



The Running Charity's mentoring and street running programme supports homeless youngsters in London, Manchester and Leeds. Above all, the sessions help to rebuild self-confidence and offers an alternative to exclusion and instability.

Secondly, Mohamed Yahya:

In 2004, Mohamed was ten years old. His family ran a successful farm in Darfur, Sudan, 'about the size of 100 football pitches with cows, sheep, goats, chicken and a donkey'. Following a militia attack, in which 21 people lost their lives, his family was displaced to an internment camp. Overall, the UN reckons that up to 300,000 people were killed in the government-sponsored genocide with two million non-Arab civilians displaced. For the next 14 years, Mohamed's family lived under canvas, under the protection of international agencies.

In 2018, despite pleading by his parents, Mohamed sneaked out of the camp with no money and just two items of spare clothing. He hid in a mini-lorry and somehow managed to cross Sudan into Libya without challenge. Had he been stopped, he knew that he would have been at high risk of kidnap and ransom.

After working for a year on a farm in Libya, Mohamed and 74 others climbed into a nine-metre boat at Tripoli. In rough seas, they got lost and ended up in Malta, rather than Italy. He was held in detention for three months and applied for asylum. However, having worked in a warehouse for two years to save money, six of them jumped onto the back of a truck bound for Italy. Then, having hidden on trains from Milan to Ventimiglia, he crept across the border overnight into France. After ten more days of jumping trains, Mohamed reached 'The Jungle' in Calais.

There, he was confronted with a major problem – he couldn't afford to pay off the people smugglers. So, nine of them bought their own dinghy, inflated it, and set off for the 'twinkling lights' of Dover in the distance. They had no lifejackets.

Mid-crossing, in strong seas, and their lives at risk, they phoned for assistance. A helicopter and the coast guard came to their rescue. After two days of processing, firstly in Dover and then at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in Bedfordshire where he was interviewed, finger-printed and health-checked, Mohamed was transferred to an asylum hotel in Swindon. That was 1 October 2021, three years after leaving Sudan. Just to be clear, the hotel has the bare minimum facilities – there are no communal areas nor canteens; just a bedroom where the men live, sleep and eat their pre-packed meals. There is little for them to do during the day other than kick their heels or wander around the town centre.

After two years and two months, Mohamed was granted refugee status. He now lives in private rented accommodation, and a more charming, courteous, well-spoken, hard working, staggeringly gutsy young man you could not hope to meet. Mohamed didn't waste his time while he awaited his 'leave to remain' in the UK. He joined in the football sessions on offer by The Harbour Project, and then volunteered to help. He then gained his coaching qualifications and he is now one of two outstanding football coaches at The Harbour Project.

Claude Umuhire
Senior Programmes Manager
The Running Charity

Mohamed Yahya
Football Coach
The Harbour Project

www.therunningcharity.org

www.harbourproject.org.uk

18. Drinking in 'The Last Chance Saloon'

Government statistics for 2023-24 show that across the adult population in England and Wales:

- 8.8% (2.9 million people) used drugs during the year.
- 1.3% used nitrous oxide.
- 0.9% used powder cocaine.
- 5,448 died of drug-related causes.
- 233,000 were being treated for drug addiction.
- 608,416 people were dependent on alcohol.

Everyone knows that dependency on drugs and alcohol is likely to lead to wretched ill-health, financial distress, the breakdown in relationships, and a cycle of crime and anti-social behaviour and yet getting to the root causes of the problems appear to be perpetually out of reach.

By his own admission, Darren Armstrong is an ex-offender, an ex-drug addict (and dealer) and he was once an angry, violent man. He pulled himself around and in 2009, he was awarded a BA (Hons) degree in Sports Development. Two years later he established the Be Strong Project in Bolton.

Be Strong is a social enterprise which adopts a four-prong approach to supporting close-knit groups of up to 13 very fragile men, who are ex-offenders and are drug or alcohol dependent. They will almost certainly be on prescriptions for anti-depressants, anti-psychotic medication or the like. The Be Strong programme offers them pastoral care, safe accommodation, practical skills (in fixing damaged washing machines) and a fitness and boxing programme.

Everyone who joins the group is in a bad way. They may be heavily overweight or dangerously underweight. They are all in a desperate state of mental health. In short, they are drinking in the Last Chance Saloon.

The men are almost always referred to the programme by the probationary service, or other outside agencies and charitable organisations, in Scotland or Stoke on Trent. This means their regular street drug suppliers are many miles away.

There is no maximum or minimum time that the men can stay on the programme, but it is normally between six and 18 months. They leave when *they* say they are ready. Which normally means they are off their medication, their health has improved, they are fitter, and they have a clear plan.

Everyone who joins the group is in a bad way. They may be heavily overweight or dangerously underweight.

Darren says:

"It is a privilege working with such fragile people. When we meet them for the first time, they are often hungry, homeless and in complete disarray.

"Success for us is getting the men 'clean' and regaining their self-respect. Our aim is to give them a second chance. Once they leave us though, it's back on their shoulders. Thankfully many go on to live valuable family lives.

"But, of course, having once been an addict, they are still vulnerable. If they choose to go back to their previous (dangerous) community, they are most at risk of crashing back into their old ways. Chris, who was a great bloke and who we thought had regained his self-control, left us to go to a funeral back in Scotland. He was fit and loved the boxing programme. Two days later he was found dead from a drug overdose. It is very sad. You just never know."

Darren Armstrong

Founder

Be Strong Project

www.be-strong.org.uk



The Be Strong Project offers ex-offenders, drug and alcohol addicts a second chance. The men are fragile and vulnerable. Following the programme, many go on to live valuable family lives. However, others are less fortunate. Such is the challenge of addictions.

PART 3.

What are tomorrow's issues?

The underlying social issues facing the country have not changed much over the past 20 years. We may be more aware now of gender inequality, physical and learning disabilities, mental ill-health, financial hardship and social exclusion, but none of them have gone away.

And now it seems we are being confronted by new challenges, not least obesity, internet addiction and, increasingly since the Covid pandemic, a sort of national lethargy. The constant beat of war-drums and looped bad news doesn't help.

So, if ever we needed to buy into Sport England's brilliant notion that 'if movement were a medicine, we would call it a miracle cure', it is now.

19. Setting the right mood-music

Who am I?

1. I am part of a sub-unit, within a bigger section, within a team.
2. We have a no-nonsense leader who sets the pace.
3. If I want to keep my place, I must practice hard.
4. I am constantly trying to hone my individual skills.
5. I need to keep fit and be on top form every time.
6. Everyone needs to know their role.
7. We learn from each other. We encourage each other.
8. I am always nervous before I go out.
9. It is important that I find my rhythm and timing straightaway.
10. Everyone needs to be operating in harmony.
11. Individual brilliance, yes. But there is no 'I' in TEAM.
12. Sometimes I have to do things at the extreme limit of my capabilities.
13. I don't want to let the others down by making a mistake.
14. We trust each other and operate in a no-blame culture. We are all in it together.
15. I am physically and mentally knackered at the end.
16. Being part of this group has improved my self-confidence.
17. We all go out to the pub afterwards to celebrate our success or drown our sorrows.
18. The action is so absorbing that, whilst I am performing, I forget all my problems.
19. It has allowed me to make some life-long friends.
20. I really look forward to doing it all over again next week.

Am I ...

a) a rugby second row forward, b) in a dance group, c) in an orchestra or d) the lead guitarist in a rock band?

Of course, it could be anyone of them. Or, indeed, all four. Although, on reflection, seeing a 6ft 8in rugby player in ballet tights and shoes might be a rather fearful sight.

The question is ... where does sport, dance and music cross over? After all, music is essential for ice-dancing, rhythmic gymnastics, dressage and synchronised swimming. And ballet, which is every bit as physically demanding as many sports, would

be very strange without its accompanying musical score. And what about the challenges of playing the violin part in a Beethoven symphony, or the drums or lead

*The question is ... where
does sport, dance
and music cross over?*

guitar in a rock band where the output can often be measured by both the quality of the music created and the amount of perspiration generated?

In short, sport without music would be very much poorer. Think of – *Abide with me* (FA Cup), *You'll Never Walk Alone* (Anfield), *Nessun Dorma* (Italia 1990), *Three Lions – Football's Coming Home* (The Lightning Seeds), *We Are The Champions* (Queen) and *Sweet Caroline* (everywhere). Think of the television, radio and film themes such as the *London Marathon*, *Test Match Special*, *Ski Sunday*, *Chariots of Fire* and *Rocky*. And think of the individual choices of the athletes who listen through their headphones to the music they think will get them into the right frame of mind for the big occasion.

And if you thought that sport dominates British television for popularity, just consider that the 2024 final of *Strictly Come Dancing* attracted some 9.3 million viewers. The NHS, Sport England and Age Concern all sing the praises of dancing for older people. But, if break-dancing can make its debut in Paris 2024 as an Olympic sport, why shouldn't dance be there for everyone? As should rock bands, choirs and orchestras. After all, they all require movement, exercise and exertion.

It's just a thought.



Hannah, at Better Things in Wythenshawe, is the first person with Down Syndrome to qualify in the UK as a Zumba instructor. The programme is open to people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

www.wearebetterthings.co.uk

20. Preparing for the future

The current socio-economic outlook in the UK is challenging. So, in this context, what do we think are the prospects for sport? Here are a few thoughts to consider.

Firstly, the gap between elite (with commercial potential) and grassroots sport looks set to widen further. This will be driven by profit-hungry US private equity firms and billionaires, and ambitious newbie-sports nations such as India, China and Saudi Arabia/UAE. If this proves to be so, the UK will lose at least some of its global influence, and with it, the gentle pull of Tom Brown and Pierre de Coubertin.

Secondly, the world's demographics will continue to skew towards the elderly. This may lead to more golf, walking football, padel and pilates. On the other hand, with the national birth rate in England and Wales at just 1.41, gathering the necessary numbers to play, officiate and administrate traditional team sports may become harder.

Next, what about the UK's 'left behind' towns and communities? Whilst ten years ago, there seemed to be a chink of light for their future, current fiscal constraints suggest that most of them will continue to be left behind. Even more dispiriting is that the dark and shadowy places that blight our inner-cities will almost certainly remain just that – dark and shadowy. It is such a waste. If only we could capture and nurture the latent talent hidden within these places, we would go such a long way to re-building the country's productivity and prosperity.

And the nation's health? Whilst there appears to be a growing understanding that sport and exercise is good for both physical and mental health, the UK seems to be adopting a 'two steps forward, one step back' shoe-shuffle. For instance, according to the ONS, in 1960, 51% of adults smoked cigarettes. The current estimate is 13%. This is certainly worthy of a silver, if not a gold, medal. However, it now seems that 7% of 11 to 17-year-olds have taken up vaping. Whilst this habit is supposedly less dangerous than cigarettes, it clearly is not risk-free.

Of course, there is now a new addiction in our midst. And this one is of pandemic proportions. It is formally known as Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). We know exactly what it is – addiction to our mobile phones and other personal devices and social media. Unfortunately, research indicates that IAD is not only causing psychiatric disorders, anxiety and depression but also a decline in our academic and work performance. And because it promotes a sedentary lifestyle, it is unsurprisingly becoming yet another cause of obesity.

Over the past 20 years, about half of Boost's grants have been awarded to disability sports programmes. Encouragingly, since the London Paralympic Games, there is now greater understanding of the challenges faced by disabled people. But the job is far from done.

So, as Boost glides into its next 20 years of grant-giving, perhaps a keener eye should also be kept out for projects that focus specifically on:

- Reducing obesity. This is tricky as it seems (especially for girls) that open confrontation about obesity can trigger a psychological backlash. But the issue really cannot be allowed to go unattended. Too many people are dying from it.
- Weaning children and young people (and older folk for that matter) off their internet and mobile phone addiction. This is another tough one.
- Improving the country's NEET record (Not in Education, Employment or Training). To make any meaningful inroads here, there needs to be a major boost in the nation's self-confidence, vitality and sense of collective pride.
- Finding a way to reach those who are trapped in the country's most dark and shadowy places and show them how the magic of sport has the potential to transform their lives.
- Backing life-dependent projects overseas which would otherwise falter because of the reduction in international aid. The practical challenge here is to be able to provide proper (and affordable) oversight to the grants.

If all this sounds a bit downbeat, it can certainly be balanced by making more grants to:

- Exceptional, extraordinary and courageous individuals who can act as valuable role models and mentors for those who are less fortunate.
- Programmes which are based around the joy of movement, music and dance. Whilst this may be stretching the definition of sport, does it matter if it fulfils the end-goal.

The issues raised in this book are wide-ranging, and often complex. The following 20 descriptors (taken from across the 20 essays) are certainly evocative – addiction, asylum seekers & refugees, physical & learning disabilities, drowning, economic inactivity, fragility, genocide, HIV/Aids, homelessness, inequality, introverted, left-behind, life-limiting, loneliness, marginalised, mental ill-health, obesity, physically inactive, shadowy, suicidal, and vulnerable.

Yet, these are the very issues confronted by Boost's funded programmes every day. However, their movement, sport and exercise programmes, consistently trump these adversities. Consider these upbeat descriptors: compassion, freedom, friendship, fulfilment, happiness, heaven, inspiration, joy, laughter & smiles, life-saving, motivation, passion, relief, role models, safe & nurturing places, spirit, self-confidence, success, transformative, well-being & good health. And hope.

These are the outcomes that Boost's funding is trying to capture.

Thank heavens for sport.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In professional circles, Boost may be described as a 'boutique'. We deliberately keep a low-profile and we work hard to be 'the most engaging grant-giving sports charity' around. We know the people who run our funded programmes well, and all the participants at our fundraising events are 'by invitation only'. We want everyone to understand what we do and why it is so important.

Each grantee programme, each fundraising event, each volunteer, each organisation and each individual who has been involved with Boost has helped shape the charity. After all, we started 20 years ago with an entirely blank sheet of paper, no track-record and no preconceived ideas.

Our success has not happened either by magic or by chance. So, in celebrating our 20th anniversary, I really must thank:

- For their thought-provoking essays and contributions to this book – Richard Allcroft OBE, Darren Armstrong, Jody Barnes, Neil Bromley, Mark Butler, Anna Castiaux, Duncan Christie-Miller, Rebecca Gibson, Neil Harris, Nozipho Mahlalela, Caroline Russell, Kim Roques, Ryan Sipple, Claude Umuhire and Mohamed Yahya.
- For their insights into the sports sector – Ben Dean (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and Baroness (Tanni) Grey-Thompson DBE.
- For raising the best part of £250,000 over the past three years – All our one-off and regular donors, plus our cyclists, golfers, endurance maniacs, London Landmarks Half-Marathon runners, marathon runners, netballers, quiz-night team members and Sports Venues walkers ... together with their grandmas, aunts, uncles and friends who have been kind enough to sponsor them.
- For making the events happen – All our organisers, photographers and volunteers.
- For their keen oversight – our financial advisers and independent examiners.
- For their ongoing financial support – St Bride's Managers who carry all of Boost's operational costs so that every pound which is raised goes undiluted to our underlying sports programmes.
- For all the inspiration and perspiration generated by our funded sports programmes – From the first (the Boost/Loughborough Rugby Coaching Academy) to the latest (Andy Benjamin, a blind rower planning to cross the Atlantic), and everything in between.
- For his legacy – Sam Sananes, who died at the ridiculously young age of 39, and his family.
- For doing all the heavy lifting as Boost's Trust Administrators/Manager – Lucy Till, Liz Turtle and latterly, Sarah Johnson.

- For their vision, commitment and engagement – our trustees, Rachel Booth, Philly Fine, Gill Houston and Howard Rogg, and currently Richard Allcroft, Oliver Bartrum, Sue Gardner, and most notably, Alurie Dutton who has been a trustee since the outset in 2005.
- For designing and printing this book of essays, and all our other printed publications – Alison Cummins and John Hines.

Thank you, all. Here's to another successful 20 years!

Robert Houston



If you have been inspired by these essays and would like to make a donation, please scan the QR code or contact:



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