

# spear

centre for sport, physical education  
& activity research



## Round the World Challenge Executive Summary



February 2022

## Context

### About Round the World Challenge

Mencap's Round the World Challenge (RTWC) is a programme designed to support people with a learning disability to become more active. Participants turn hours of sport and activity into distance travelled around the world, with progress recorded in specially designed passports.



Following the pilot programme in 2014-2017, Sport England and Mencap invested in rolling RTWC out across England for a further three years (2019-2022) and introducing and resourcing the programme in Gravesham.

RTWC delivery is organised by Project Managers through regional Hubs. Delivery outputs and impacts are collated through the RTWC portal. The Hubs create a support network for individual, group and organisational providers: they provide a forum for sharing experience and expertise; support to access and use the RTWC portal, funding and resources; and guidance around provision of activity opportunities for people with a learning disability.

Covid-19 has affected the roll out and evaluation of RTWC and its development in Gravesham. It has also posed unprecedented challenges to people's daily lives. Rather than diminishing the value of the programme, the strengths of RTWC are exposed by the role it has played in helping people with a learning disability to manage these challenges.

### About *spear's* evaluation

*spear* was commissioned from June 2019 to February 2022 to conduct an independent evaluation of RTWC. The evaluation assesses the impacts of RTWC on stakeholders, and how these impacts have been achieved. It explores the challenges faced, showcases effective practice and provides key messages for enhancing provision.

The overarching evaluation comprises a rapid evidence review of activity interventions for people with a learning disability;<sup>1</sup> 10 multimedia case studies from site visits to RTWC locations; 110 interviews with RTWC providers; and secondary analysis of output and impact data from the RTWC portal.

The Final Report is divided into five substantive sections: Engagement, Delivery, Impact, Achievements, and Next Steps. Key Messages are also provided. Five case studies are presented in appendix A and on the [spear website](#).

This Executive Summary presents infographic summaries of Engagement, Delivery, and Impact alongside Key Messages for *Creating positive experiences in active communities for people with a learning disability*.

### RTWC outcomes

*...for participants*

1. Increased participation in sports or physical activity
2. Improved measures of health and wellbeing
3. Behaviour change and the formation of a sporting habit

*...for providers*

1. Improved social attitudes
2. Increased awareness of the role played in health promotion for people with learning disabilities
3. Increased opportunities for people with learning disabilities to participate in sport and physical activities

<sup>1</sup> [spear \(2021\) Rapid evidence review: Creating positive experiences in active communities.](#)

## Headline findings

Since 2019, RTWC has engaged almost 4,000 people with a learning disability in over 105,000 hours of sport and physical activity.



Participants joined RTWC to have fun, build confidence, become healthier, try new sports, learn new skills, make friends and feel more independent.



Providers engaged to expand or refresh their activity offer, enhance collaborative work and support participants' health, wellbeing, development and quality of life.



RTWC resources such as t-shirts, passports and postcards were highly effective in engaging and incentivising participation.



Over 200 providers participated in RTWC, delivering or facilitating over 41,000 activity sessions and training 361 participant volunteers.



RTWC appealed to providers because it was person-centred, simple in concept, structured, funded, and supported by Mencap and through the Hubs.



2014-2017 – RTWC pilot



2019-2022 – RTWC programme



“ Exercise is so important... to be offering throughout lockdown for people's physical health. But the thing we were most worried about was everyone's mental health.   
 Alison, Choice Support

“ We started designing a collaborative programme where we could use RTWC as a springboard for co-operative, 'leave-your-ego-at-the-door' work. RTWC provided a really nice opportunity where it was very person-centred, very simple in concept to do that.   
 Kris, Bristol Bears

RTWC aims to support

health

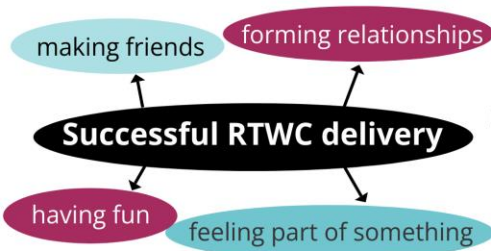
wellbeing

development



through appealing and accessible opportunities to be active.





RTWC resources such as **t-shirts, passports and postcards** incentivise participation

“  
*But it's more than that: if you put on a t-shirt, you're part of a team*

Zoe, Gravesham Phab Club



RTWC funding mainly spent on:

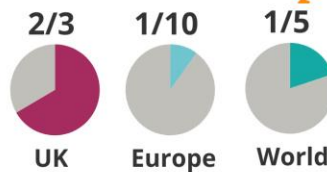
- specialised coaches
- facility hire
- travel
- equipment



Flexibility around funding helped providers **maximise opportunities** and **outcomes** for participants

Participants' sense of belonging was enhanced through opportunities to **choose, plan** and **lead** activities

Participants topped up hours of activity accrued in RTWC with activity completed elsewhere to reach target routes. Some took on multiple routes



**361** participants trained as volunteers

“  
*We've got two hubs, one in the north of Bristol, one in the south, and each has a rotation of four different providers so it's a carousel for the service users. So participants get to trial and revisit everything.*

Kris, Bristol Bears

## Headline findings

Covid-19 affected all aspects of RTWC including engagement, staffing, facilities, activities, delivery mechanism and programme focus.



Throughout the pandemic, providers delivered or facilitated activities that support mental health and reduce loneliness and isolation.



Activities were delivered online and face-to-face as appropriate, with many providers offering a dual service to cater for varying levels of participant vulnerability and readiness to re-engage.



Several providers took advantage of Mencap's 'Let's Get Digital' programme to increase service users' accessibility to online provision and support.



Activities delivered and participated in most often include walking, online activities, multisports, dance, gym, yoga, boccia and team sports.

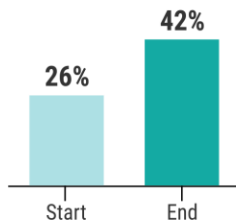


Providers have embraced RTWC's cross curricular application, celebrating countries reached en route by making flags, cooking national dishes and dressing up in traditional costume.



## Participants

Significant increase in number of participants who are 'Active'



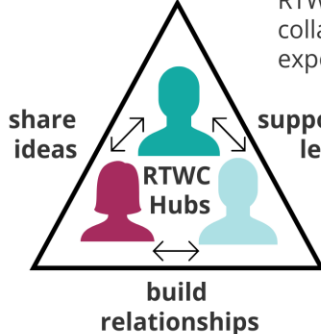
“using physical activity to make them more active, but also as an opportunity to improve their wellbeing and understanding of how to look after themselves.”  
Tom, Inclusive Sport

Providers observed increases in:

- confidence
- aspirations
- social skills
- independence
- willingness to try new things
- sense of belonging



## Providers



RTWC provided a tangible opportunity for collaboration that increased organisational exposure, reach, remit and sustainability.

Providers able to find out what activities were available for service users

Leisure providers able to find groups who could benefit from their services

During the pandemic, RTWC was a means of keeping contact with service users and for some providers, was the **only programme** they were able to deliver.



## Headline findings

RTWC is reported by participants, providers and carers to have been a lifeline during Covid-19, giving them motivation, structure and purpose.

Providers believe RTWC helped offset the impacts of lockdown restrictions on participants' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Participants' activity levels increased significantly, with the percentage reporting to be 'Active' (150+ mins p/wk), rising from 26% to 42% (↑62%) between the start and end of programme engagement.

Significant increases are evident in participants' happiness and confidence playing sports and being active with others, their enjoyment of new activities and understanding of how to live a healthy life.

RTWC also impacted wider wellbeing outcomes, with the percentage of participants feeling happy, accepted, valued and respected rising significantly across the programme.

Providers say engagement in RTWC strengthened networks, resulting in meaningful collaboration, better provision, increased reach and more appealing, diverse and sustainable activity opportunities.

## *Creating positive experiences in active communities for people with a learning disability*



### Get to know people



Research and practice show understanding the Whole Person is key to successful activity interventions. Providers highlight the uniqueness of people with a learning disability and embrace the diversity in their desires, aspirations and expectations. However, they also recognise this diversity poses challenges, and that these challenges can only be overcome by getting to know and understand the whole person.

*"Assume you know nothing, build a relationship, and the rest of it will come"*

Kris, Bristol Bears

### Support the supporters



Providers say caregivers are critical to creating positive activity experiences for people with a learning disability, but few strategically plan how to engage them. Those that do focus on two aspects: Education and Support. Providers successfully engaging caregivers spend time building relationships, communicating the value of activity and making engagement as appealing and accessible as possible.

*"Overtime support workers will see it's worthwhile, it's relaxed and it's fun and they can't help but get involved"*

Tom, Inclusive Sport

### Trust in partnerships



A Whole Systems Approach involves building a supportive infrastructure around the individual. The more levels of the infrastructure orientated to be supportive, and the more they work together, the better the chance of success. RTWC demonstrates how effective partnership work is, but it is the trust between partners that is seen as pivotal to the programme's reach and impact.

*"If we come together under one banner, if we trust one another, we can achieve so much more"*

Lizzie, Access Sport

### Campaign, incentivise and reward



Support across the health, sport and leisure sectors is key to achieving a Whole Systems Approach to increasing activity opportunities for people with a learning disability. Providers call for targeted campaigns from key sport and disability organisations and recognition of inclusive activity provision through a quality standard or Kitemark. Action is advocated to raise awareness of social and financial value, secure buy-in, and increase provision of high quality, accessible and affordable activity opportunities.

*"It's not saying do everything for free, help these people out; it's saying here's the value, the value to being more aware, more accessible and more inclusive"*

Kris, Bristol Bears

## About *spear*

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (*spear*) is located within the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Social Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University. *spear* undertakes a range of evidence-led analyses, from critical commentaries and reflections on current policy and practice, to commissioned research, evaluation and consultancy.

The Centre's research is funded by a range of national and international funders such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organisation, Terre des Hommes, Department of Health, Department for Education, Youth Sport Trust, Chance to Shine, Premiership Rugby, Sport Birmingham, parkrun UK and Sport England. Recent work has focused on sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing in schools and communities.

Research conducted by *spear* helps guide and inform public policy by contributing to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, providing a rationale for government and commercial investment, and steering programme improvements that enhance the experience of practitioners and participants.

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