

# Exploring the Social Impact of the RLWC2021 School Legacy Programme



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# Purpose

**Doncaster hosted three of the men's RLWC2021 matches at the Eco-Power Stadium. Aligned to the RLWC2021, a School Legacy Officer was appointed to deliver the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme, coordinating with schools to engage the pupils, families and teachers with the tournament. The role also supported local Ruby league clubs to increase opportunities.**

## **What did the programme involve?**

The programme included 16 schools within Doncaster, each assigned a nation for the tournament. The programme consisted of active rugby sessions supplemented by educational packs supporting the curriculum to include learning regarding the RLWC2021 competing countries' cultures. An inter-school competition was organised between the 16 schools. To link schools and local rugby league clubs, the programme also coordinated engagement opportunities, such as cultural and dance activities, and 'meet and greets' with Doncaster's host team (Samoa). To support the delivery of this programme, alongside the Legacy Officer, volunteer recruitment was required. A key objective of the programme was to build sustainability of the Social Impact of the RLWC2021.

## **What were the aims of the research?**

- To explore the social impact of the RLWC2021 Schools Legacy programme;
- To develop insight into optimising the effectiveness of the Legacy Officer role for future events;
- To advise recommendations for future school legacy roles.

***"The RLWC2021 was a great opportunity to grow the game, build more community-orientated clubs and to expose kids to new experiences and create memories"***

# METHODS





# Methods

A mixed-method approach was adopted, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection in the form of surveys and interviews. Data collection was undertaken during November and December 2022. Key contacts at the 16 schools were surveyed, the Legacy Officer and three key contacts at the three local rugby league clubs were interviewed. The data collected from these participants enabled a more holistic understanding of the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme and its impact.

Data was analysed statistically and qualitative data has been analysed to identify emerging themes supporting the statistics. The sample size included all sixteen schools involved in the programme and these have been stated as a fraction (e.g. 1/16, equals one out of the sixteen schools).



**Interviews**  
3 Participants



**School Survey**  
16 Schools



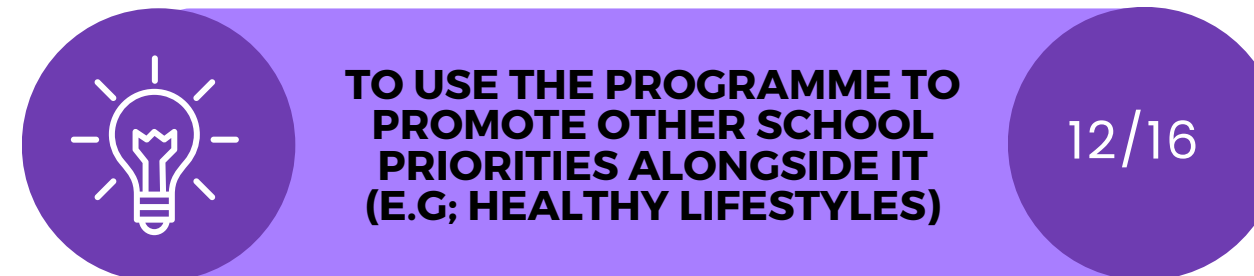
**Club Survey**  
3 Clubs

**Analysis**

# FINDINGS



# Motivations of Schools to Participate in the programme



# Anticipated Impact of the School Legacy programme



13/16

*schools stated they understood the objectives of the School Legacy programme.*

The respondents were then asked what change/impact they hoped to see for their school from participating in the programme. The school's anticipated impact of the programme varied. For example, some schools hoped for making rugby accessible for all where as some schools hoped more for upskilling teachers. All the schools hoped for at least three changes/impact from the programme.

**Below highlights the different changes/impacts hoped for by the schools:**

1 SCHOOL

Did not specify what change/impact they would like to see

13 SCHOOLS

The school linking better with local rugby clubs

15 SCHOOLS

Pupils being more active

10 SCHOOLS

The school considered a champion of supporting local Doncaster events

16 SCHOOLS

Pupils being able to experience rugby

12 SCHOOLS

Making rugby accessible for all

12 SCHOOLS

Upskilling teachers in rugby activities to continue after the RLWC



# Pupil Impact

**8 Schools** strongly agree that the School Legacy programme positively impacted pupils.

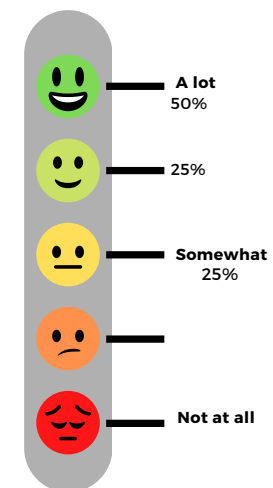
**8 Schools** agree that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on pupils.

All respondents indicated the programme positively impacted their pupils. The RLWC2021 provided a unique opportunity for pupils to learn new skills, build their confidence in a new activity and be exposed to memorable 'once in a lifetime' experiences. Schools commented positively on that all genders, abilities and skill-level were welcomed to try rugby. For some, the opportunity encouraged new individuals to play rugby and generated a new interest to watch rugby on TV.

For pupils that enjoyed rugby and wanted to continue their interest, some joined a rugby after-school club (offered by the majority of schools). Additionally, some schools were able to make local links to the rugby league community clubs, commenting that some pupils have begun attending sessions. Please note at the time of the report that there are no statistics yet on how many pupils have joined their local rugby club.

In previous sporting event research for Doncaster, both the Tour de Yorkshire and UCI World Championships highlighted the need for better design and delivery of community events and activities targeted at young people. The RLWC2021 School Legacy programme has provided useful insight that with school 'buy-in', young people can develop their engagement with sporting events by using the school as a vehicle to drive social impact. While it is clear there has been some social impact benefits, the absence of clear social impact indicators for young people were not specified at the beginning of the programme so monitoring and evaluation could not effectively capture the intended social impact benefits. For future programmes Gameplan 2023 can support this process.

## Pupils are wanting to play rugby activities more



"Children are more interested and confident in taking part"

"Provided extra opportunities to engage in a new sport with a coach associated with a club. Pupils access the opportunity to purchase tickets for the event at Doncaster. Provided a once in a life-time opportunity to be involved in a worldwide tournament. Built self-confidence and improved engagement"

"Awareness, confidence, opportunity, experience, a huge impact"

"Several pupils have since joined local rugby teams due to their enjoyment of the tag rugby festival"

"Pupils got to experience professional sporting event and that's always good. It brought families and communities together. I think prices of tickets could have been less to encourage more to go and fill the stadium in my opinion"

"Introduced Tag rugby to many pupils who have never played before. Many interested and therefore participated in the festivals before and after the summer break. We've had plenty of pupils carry on playing further and join local clubs. Pupils participated in the Hill House Tag Festival this last week. One pupil was offered a scholarship for PE due to his performance. He started playing rugby this September as he was interested in being involved for the Schools Legacy Tag rugby Festival"

"It's raised the profile of the sport and inspired more children to join our Ruby after school club"



# Family Impact

**6 Schools** **strongly agree** that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on families.

**8 Schools** **agree** that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on families.

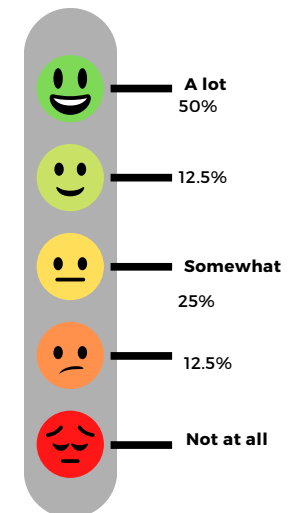
**2 Schools** **did not know** whether the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on families.

The programme's positive impact on families was perceived less strongly (than pupil impact) by respondents.

A key emerging theme for family impact was the opportunity provided to families to watch the RLWC2021 games at the Eco Power Stadium. Each RLWC2021 match (hosted in Doncaster) saw an increase in the number of tickets requested by schools, suggesting enthusiasm and interest grew as the tournament progressed. However, the research highlights the barrier of cost for some families. Although the tickets were offered at a reduced price, some schools felt that the price remained a barrier to attending. Another factor may have been the date/time of the matches with some comments suggesting weekends were preferred.

Findings were mixed regarding the perceived enthusiasm shown by families towards the RLWC. The barometer on the right presents the disparity between schools and perceived family enthusiasm. However, for those that did attend, it appears a sense of 'togetherness' was felt.

## Families were enthusiastic to be involved with the school and RLWC



**"Low level engagement from families"**

**"Ability to watch and access a worldwide event together in a safe environment"**

**"Many family tickets bought for the Greece vs. France and Papua New Guinea vs. Wales games, and some have started watching the local teams"**

**"Raised the profile of rugby and got families excited"**

**"Gave opportunity for family's to spend time together and experience a World Cup event in their community"**

**"Families have had the opportunity to watch international rugby"**



# Teacher/School Impact

**6 Schools strongly agree** that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on teachers/schools.

**8 Schools agree** that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on teachers/schools.

**2 Schools neither agree nor disagree** that the School Legacy programme had a positive impact on teachers/schools.

The programme has had a positive impact on the majority of schools. All schools received a similar itinerary of the programme with the exception of the school assigned "Somoa" (as their school's nationality was the host by Doncaster so received greater resources). The programme involved further additions such as meet and greets with the Somoan international players and learning the cultural 'Haka' dance.

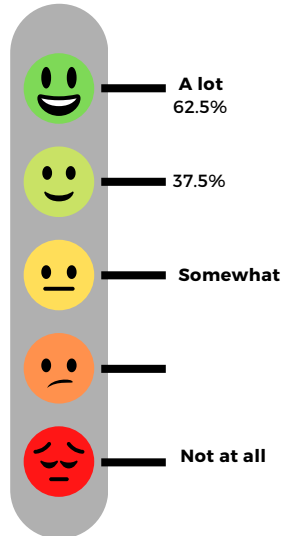
Schools were positive regarding the opportunity for match day volunteering such as flag bearing. The match days provided a school trip opportunity for the teachers to further develop relationships with their school community.

13/16 schools felt the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme could be incorporated into curriculum learning. This is a positive finding as it does not add any additional pressure on teachers to 'fit' the programme around the curriculum.

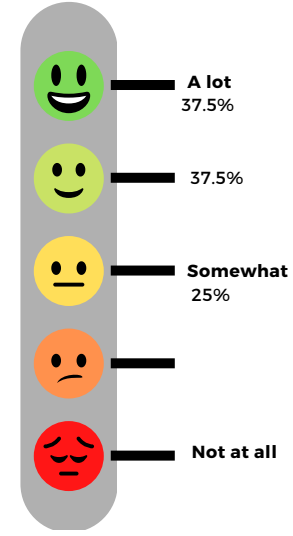
For some schools, teachers became more confident in rugby league and tag rugby, gaining new ideas and games that could be continued post-tournament. Additionally, some schools encouraged watching the tournament by showing the match highlights to their class.

For some schools, connecting with the local rugby league clubs was further strengthened and for others, the connection is yet to be explored further. Some comments alluded to a lack of communication with the clubs.

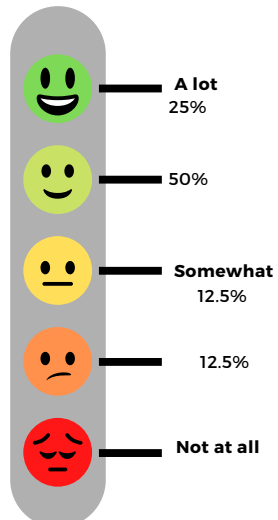
**The school was provided opportunities to be part of the match days.**



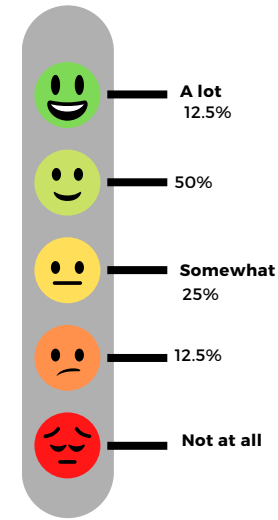
**The RLWC has positively raised the profile of rugby league within school**



**The programme created a 'buzz' within the school**



**The school is more connected with the local rugby club**



**"Visit of professional players, trophies and planning. They have all inspired and motivated staff to engage in rugby"**

**"Developed CPD and enhanced curriculum"**

**"Teachers being more confident in tag rugby and rugby rules"**

**"Provided the opportunity to engage with a qualified coach, to see delivery at first hand and to see new ideas and games"**

**"School played highlights of the game through breaks and often during lesson"**

**"Teachers spent time with the children at the event and their family's so developed relationships further"**



# Important Elements of the programme

All schools involved in the programme were interested in future school opportunities surrounding major sport events.

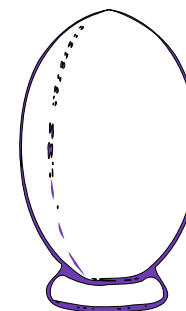
When asked what is important for potential future Legacy programmes, **communication of information**, **high-quality delivery**, and **timelines** were stated. Additionally, having more **coaching resources** as the existing provision was perceived as limited. The **match day experiences** and **competitions** were also seen as important elements if future Legacy programmes were available. Some comments also alluded to having more of an equal opportunity for receiving delivery of sessions and player visits from rugby professionals.

The below presents some of the highlights shared by respondents.

The amazing opportunities to meet elite sportsman and watch live international rugby.



The tournament buzz for the kids to go to and the match day experience, watching a live international rugby game was good for the children and their families.



Pupils being flag bearers and meeting some of the players after the game.

Tickets for RLWC and tag rugby tournaments.

Our pupils, community and colleagues being part of something that was on a world stage.

The highlight for the pupils was the game they became flag bearers. For pupils who weren't involved in that day, the highlight was the tag rugby festival.



# CLUB FEEDBACK

***Three key contacts at the local rugby league Clubs were sent a survey to complete, reflecting on the RLWC2021 and the impact on their club (if any).***

All respondents strongly agreed that the Samoa community club visit positively impacted the players. The opportunity provided existing players to meet their role models and receive advice and motivation to continue their rugby passion. Some rugby league club players also got to experience the "Captain Run" (the Samoa team trained the players) which exposed players to a new and memorable experience. All clubs expressed that this opportunity had a positive impact on the players. While the rugby clubs already have an engaged and active audience of players for rugby, the community club visit attracted new faces from the community too. This is a promising finding as future events could leverage the 'clubs as hubs' for the local community to feel more part of local events.

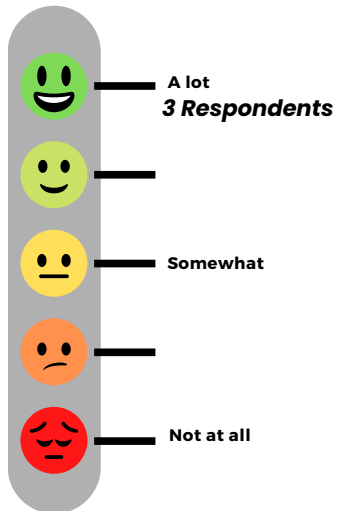
While the RLWC2021 had been perceived as raising the profile of rugby, one respondent somewhat agreed that it will help attract more players. Additionally, linking with previous findings that some schools did not feel connected to their local rugby clubs, the findings were mixed when asked if "the club is more connected to the local community (e.g. schools, businesses)". However, further comments mentioned that long-term, the school-club connection would like to be strengthened.

***"Looking back, is there anything you feel the club could have done differently to be more involved in the RLWC, the community, or to grow the game?"***

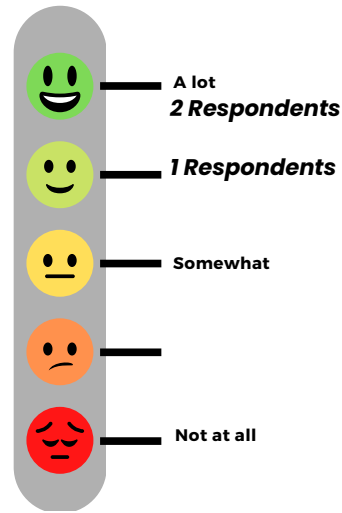
One respondent highlighted that they wish they'd organised a club trip away from Doncaster for the club, parents and children. Another respondent suggested more promotion could have been done for the event in Doncaster. This contrasts a respondent that stated lots had been done, however, neither stated whether this was specifically in the Doncaster city centre or in respective Doncaster communities. Research by CFE Research found that 78% of surveyed residents who did not travel to the city centre saw no advertisements. Potentially, more localised promotion for the RWLC2021 or future events would increase awareness.



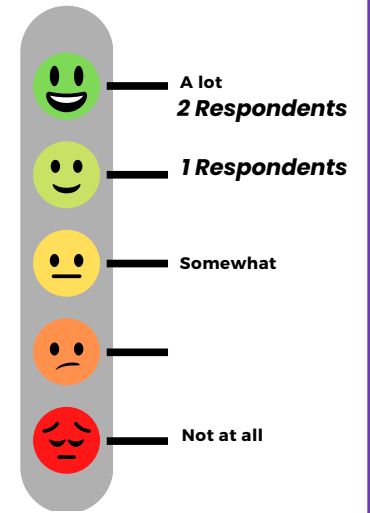
**The Samoa Community visit positively impacted the players**



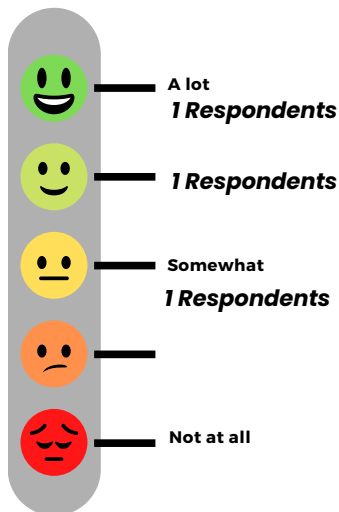
**The Captain Run positively impacted the club/players**



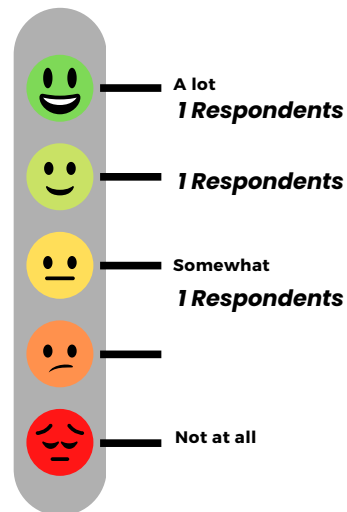
**The RLWC2021 has positively raised the profile of rugby**



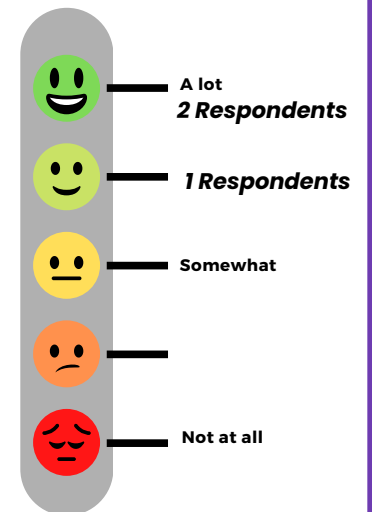
**The RLWC will help attract more players**



**The club is connected more to the local community (e.g. school, business)**



**The RLWC made me feel more optimistic about the future of the sport**



"Match day experiences for our club was fantastic, all our players got something out of the games held in Doncaster and especially the visit from Samoa. Long term we would like more engagement with schools. Even if it's just social media or advertising in and around schools, just to get the message our club is here in the community"

"In hindsight I wish we would have put on a club trip to attend a game away from Doncaster and went to watch England or one of the bigger nations. This would have been good for the club, the kids and parents and the game as a whole"

"Do more to the run up to promote the event in Doncaster"



"Club Doncaster was out and about nearly every day. So getting the word out about the World Cup being in our home town I don't think they could have done more. We've been in contact with those involved for months"

"The events that were organised around the World Cup and the games at Doncaster were amazing. The team of Dean Wiffen, Carl Hall and Martin Rowlands in delivering the experiences for the local community clubs were first class. The visit of the Samoan Team to our club attracted around 150 kids who are linked to our club and easily 20 plus that weren't and don't play rugby. We even had a team from Hull turn up for the occasion that we were not expecting. The kids in our junior section loved the flag bearing and mascot duties, something they will not forget in a hurry"

# Sustainability of the School Legacy programme

*"(Sustainability) When we believe in the work we are doing, we want to find ways of keeping it going; making it a permanent part of the community" (Gameplan, 2023)*

## What does sustainability look like for the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme?

Before the programme began, no official indicators to focus upon were stated for the longevity of the programme. However, from the research (see respondent quotations on the next page), sustainable actions developed organically as part of the programme, such as keeping rugby league activities within the school and linking schools with clubs to support growing participants. This provides useful insight into how these could be maximised in the future through the setting of clear objectives.



Offering Tag rugby as an after-school activity is a popular theme among respondents. However, this relies on the school's assets (e.g. staff feeling confident to deliver the activity) and competing with other school plans for the Curriculum. Some school and community club links have been made but some schools felt that the relationships and timeliness of communication could have leveraged pupils' engagement better.

# Sustainability of the School Legacy programme

"After school Tag rugby Clubs to run for a full term each year. Tag rugby to run in lessons and local clubs promoted"

"Afterschool rugby club to engage children further into rugby"

"After school clubs would be great but you need coaches available, who are qualified, experienced and available. We would love an after school club"

"Clubs could have come to the school for after school sessions to make the link with pupils"

"Interest in potential rugby league teams across schools"

"With funding"

"Both after school club and in curriculum time"

"Communication between clubs and schools could more timely"

"Staff development and motivation of more children to engage in the sport"

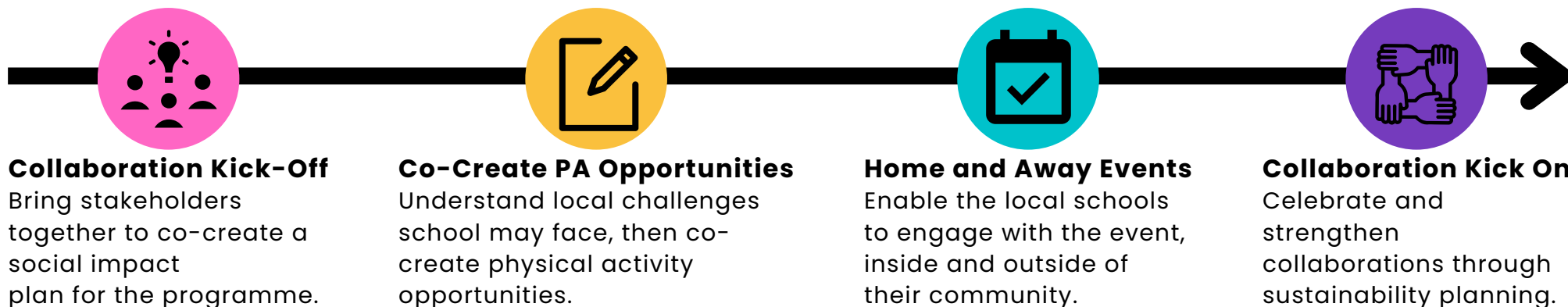
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"Tag rugby is on the National Curriculum so will therefore be taught once every 24-months for a full term. Tag rugby Clubs will also run once a year for a full term"

# Sustainability of the School Legacy programme

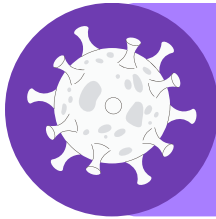
Previous developmental research with Doncaster Council identified sustainability of social impact should be a forethought and not an afterthought. Thinking about what social impact 'looks/feels like' and how engagement can be enhanced and sustained by linking actions within the Ready, Set, Go and Next stages of Gameplan, can focus actions of intent for the desired outcomes of making the School Legacy programme sustainable.

For example, the below highlights an action in each of the four stages that can link together to support strengthening the sustainability of the programme from start to end. The **Collaboration Kick-Off** can provide clear outcomes that each school wants to achieve from the programme. This could then have helped **Co-Create PA Opportunities** specific to the school and tweak opportunities for school involvement with the **Home and Away Event** days. The **Collaboration Kick On** can then be used as a reflection to revisit existing plans and actions to learn and move forward. It is important to note that this level of sustainable planning requires more resources, and the programme's capacity was limited (time of Legacy Officer). However, there is also the potential for 'subtraction' which reduces the activities (e.g. the number of schools involved) to improve the quality by increasing capacity.



# CHALLENGES

Below, highlights the challenges that emerged for schools engaging with the School Legacy Programme. These challenges are not insurmountable and present friction that can be addressed through the application of Gameplan 2023 knowledge.



## Covid-19

Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 caused disruptions to the delivery of the programme. The programme was extended an additional year (3-years total) however the delivery timeline was altered and school Covid-19 rules caused complications.



## Transport

The location of the Tag rugby Festival caused transport issues as some schools were unable to or struggled to afford a mini-bus. Additionally, some families did not have access to/could not afford transport from their local community to the Eco-Power Stadium to watch matches.



## Cost

The cost of tickets was a barrier to some families attending matches. The cost of transport presented similar challenges; not least because in some cases schools were unable to allocate the School Sport Premium to this activity.



## Communication

For some, the communication of planning logistics was a challenge. Staff would have liked more notice to ensure appropriate inter-school planning and staffing to support the pupil involvement in the programme.

# Summary

Overall, the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme presented an exciting opportunity to engage with various young people by working with schools. The event provided a 'once in a lifetime' experience for some pupils on match days and for existing players at local rugby clubs to meet their role models. There have been some positive findings from this event and programme, as well as insight that can help guide learning for improving future events and School Legacy programmes.



## **The anticipated impact of the programme varied between schools**

Each school indicated their hopes for the impact of the programme. While there were some similarities between schools, there were also differences in the anticipated impact of the programme. This suggests that each school may have benefitted from a more locally contextualised School Legacy programme.



## **Schools play a crucial role in leveraging children's and young people's event engagement**

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the programme positively impacted pupils, supported by comments of improved confidence, greater interest in watching rugby and uptake in playing rugby. Not all sports will engage every pupil. However having the opportunity to experience new activities is important.



## **The programme could be incorporated into the School Curriculum**

A common barrier to teachers implementing new things into school is time. Enabling the schools to have access to and support from RLWC2021 resources that can integrate into the wider school curriculum lowers the demands on staff. Although some schools felt the programme could've merged better with the Curriculum, this is good learning for future programmes to build on.



## **The local rugby league club acted as a hub**

The community rugby league club visit from Somoa attracted new individuals to attend as well as already engaged members of the club. This is promising as future events could leverage this approach to attract more of the community to come together.





### **Curating 'engagers' and not just 'spectators' was highly valued**

Highlights from all respondents referenced the match day experiences, such as volunteering, flag bearing, dancing or attending the matches on a world stage. Additionally, the Tag rugby School festival created excitement and provided the opportunity to be a part of something new and special. These experiences created a more personal touch for some pupils and schools to immerse into the event, rather than passively watch on TV (or not at all).



### **The findings were mixed between schools**

The findings are mixed between the schools. For example, some schools felt very connected to their local rugby league club, where as other schools did not feel connected. Additionally, family engagement in schools fluctuated. This suggests despite the schools receiving the same programme (with the exception of the school that received "Somoa" as their nation), the journey and experience have been different. This could be accountable to the school's assets (e.g available resources, budget, staff enthusiasm) and challenges encountered along the way. A more tailored approach could help optimise the programme impacts.



### **There are elements of the programme that can be made sustainable**

The programme did not state at the beginning the intended social impact, sustainability plans or plan activities aligned to the relevant social impact indicators (for example, an indicator may have been "to increase the sense of civic pride within schools"). This could have been undertaken by an initial consultation with involved stakeholders at the beginning (Gameplan tactic, Collaboration Kick-Off). There is a small window of opportunity to help continue engagement and positively impact further such as linking all schools better with local rugby clubs and consulting with schools about what could support them to continue rugby in school.



# Future Recommendations

From the research undertaken, the RLWC2021 School Legacy programme has positively impacted the pupils involved in the short term. For future School Legacy programmes, the following recommendations have been made to support optimising the social impact over the longer term and supporting future Legacy Officer roles.



## **Plan for sustainability at the beginning**

Adopting a Gameplan approach will support collaborative thinking and planning for the future at the start. To complement sustainability as a focus, implementing monitoring and evaluation at the beginning of the programme (e.g. understand what schools need and want), during the programme (e.g. impact of activities, schools and family perceptions/experiences) and after the programme (e.g. what's happened as a result and what needs to happen) will enable more 'real-time' feedback to improve the programme.



## **Transport provision for schools and families**

The project co-ordinated with 16 schools for the delivery of sessions, the Tag rugby Festival at Hill House and match day experiences. Transport was a challenge for some schools to the Tag rugby Festival and for some families lack of (affordable) transport was a barrier to attending matches. For future programmes, having a transport budget may help support schools and families engaging further with the event, overcoming any concerns of travelling from their community to the venue,



## **Leverage "Clubs as Hubs" to improve community involvement**

For future events, utilising community assets such as sports clubs and facilities can help attract new individuals that may not be engaged with the event, sport, or community. Creating a welcoming environment can encourage people to return.



# Future Recommendations



## **Tailor the programme to the school's context**

As mentioned, there were mixed findings between schools. While some schools had a really strong positive experience, others felt that social impact was less prevalent. It is important to have clear umbrella aims/objectives with the flexibility for schools to identify some specific objectives. As each school's context varies (such as demographics, location to facilities, skill-set of staff and family engagement) and anticipated impacts of the programme vary, it may be beneficial to conduct a baseline consultation with the school before beginning the programme, to understand the school's assets and potential challenges so solutions can be built. Co-creation can be undertaken to develop the programme with schools, and supported by a Gameplan mentor to support the planning stages.



## **Addition or subtraction of resources**

To fulfil the programme, there was one Legacy Officer. The recommendations suggested, contain extra resources needed in monitoring and evaluation, providing an extra budget for transport costs and consulting with the schools more prior to beginning the programme. It is unlikely that this could be fulfilled by one Legacy Officer role therefore it is advised to increase the number of Legacy Officers or the supporting network (such as a research team) or subtract the number of schools to allow greater capacity-focused (by one Legacy Officer) across fewer schools. Allowing an ample timeline to plan and create a system and process to cope with the demands of the role is important at the beginning.



## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the Doncaster Schools and the local rugby league clubs who participated in the research. Your experiences and feedback are valued.

Thank you to Dean Wiffen and Martin Rowlands who helped coordinate the research.



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