

Yorkshire Sport Foundation and Rounders England

Using Rounders as a Sport for Development tool

Learning report and toolkit



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Introduction

In Spring 2023 a consortium of partners including: Rounders England, Yorkshire Sport Foundation and Ready Steady Active came together to understand the role Rounders played in getting people active.

In West Yorkshire, Rounders is a growth sport. In particular, it is played by adult women from a wide variety of different ethnicities and backgrounds. In other words, it is played by those groups traditionally seen as ‘hard to reach’ by organisations interested in reducing inactivity.

The growth of Rounders in West Yorkshire has been organic. But a local organisation, Ready Steady Active, has played a key role in supporting, mentoring, encouraging and profile raising of the sport and helping women see the sport is for them. In addition, they have created practical opportunities for people to enter the sport by providing opportunities for people to play informally and opportunities for teams to compete against each other.

This learning report aims to show a wide range of audiences interested in sports development:

- Why Rounders works as a sport to help get inactive people more active by addressing some of the key barriers people face to being active
- Why sports like Rounders reach the wider Sport for Development work it can support
- What the key features that Rounders in West Yorkshire is built on and so what others may need to replicate the success

Research Approach

To support the research that has fed into this learning report, Shephard & Moyes were commissioned to provide advice and support in the data collection period.

Our overall approach to the research is shown in Figure 1. To support the research planning we held a workshop with Rounders England, Ready Steady Active and three current Rounders players. This allowed us to identify the following priorities for the research and informed our survey design:

- Outcomes – what difference does it make to the women involved in Rounders. What have been the features of the delivery that have led to people staying engaged?
- Process – what are the specific features of Rounders that make it accessible to people?

- Learning – how can the experiences of Rounders in West Yorkshire be replicated in other parts of the country?

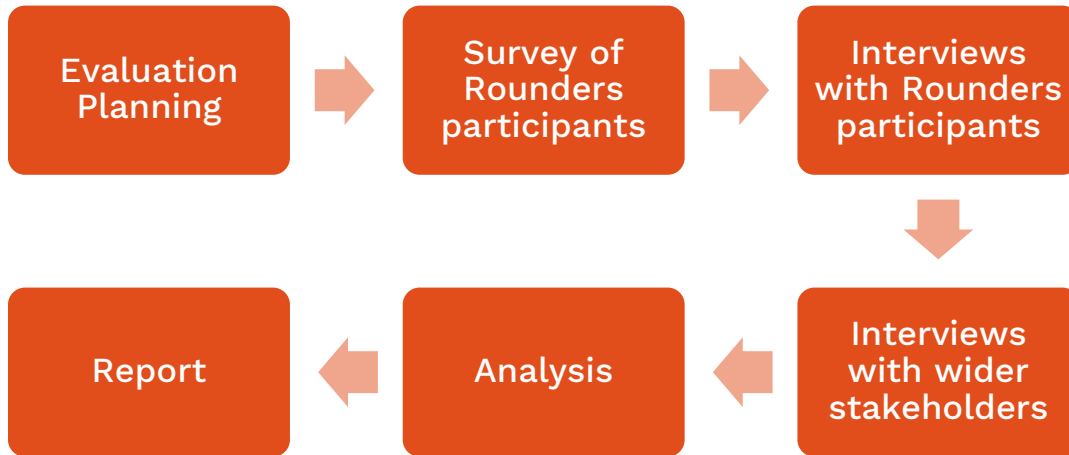


Figure 1 - Research approach

The remainder of this report contains the findings from our research. It is based on 51 responses to a survey with Rounders players and 15 interviews that took place at a Ready Steady Active Rounders League.

It starts by providing an overview of the basics of Rounders. It then goes on to show how it can be used to tackle inactivity before showcasing some of the wider impacts the sport can have. It finishes by providing some key insights around why Rounders has developed in West Yorkshire and the learning others can take to develop the sport in their area.

About Rounders

Rounders is a sport with a curious combination of high and low awareness. Most people who went to school in the UK will have played Rounders at school. But both elite and grassroots Rounders has a much lower profile among adults.

Rounders England is the National Governing Body for the sport and are working hard to make Rounders more visible, with a particular focus on using Rounders as a tool to tackle inactivity and to promote community development by connecting communities through Rounders.

The people involved in this research identified Rounders England as an approachable governing body who are inclusive of the Rounders community. This includes making their board meetings and Annual General Meetings open so players can be involved and developing a talent pathway and Golden Tickets to give more people the opportunity to take part at the national level.

The basics

Rounders is a game that can be played indoors or outdoors and it is played by:

- Two teams with 9 people per team
- Each team is batting or fielding
- The game consists of two innings with 27-30 balls per inning
- Running around the bases results in a full or half Rounder
- There are four bases, a batting square, fields, back stop, a bowler and a batter
- Fielders are based anywhere with key positions on: the bases; back stop and bowler
- Each game has two umpires, one watching the batting, the other the bowling

Rounders can have lots of rules and can be highly tactical. But the basics are simple: bowler bowls to a batter who tries to run round four bases. When people are new to Rounders the rules can be stripped right back to make it accessible and easy to start.

Rounders is flexible and adaptable which allows for easy changes in the rules to make it accessible to people of all levels of experience. It means it can act as a gateway sport for women which can help start their physical activity journey.

Understanding inactivity

Inactivity is a huge problem. 27% of adults in England do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week, it is thought to be associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually¹.

But inactivity is complex and the reasons why people are inactive are varied. Inactivity is also not a fixed feature of our lives. Shephard & Moyes has been doing research since Covid-19 which suggests people are constantly moving from periods of inactivity and periods where they are more active. The reasons for the change (both positive and negative) is often associated with transitions. For example, starting a family, starting a new job or having a change in health status.

Understanding barriers

Figure 2 shows the barriers women involved in our research identified to them taking part in sport and physical activity. For most women the biggest barriers are around work and family commitments, although confidence is also an issue.

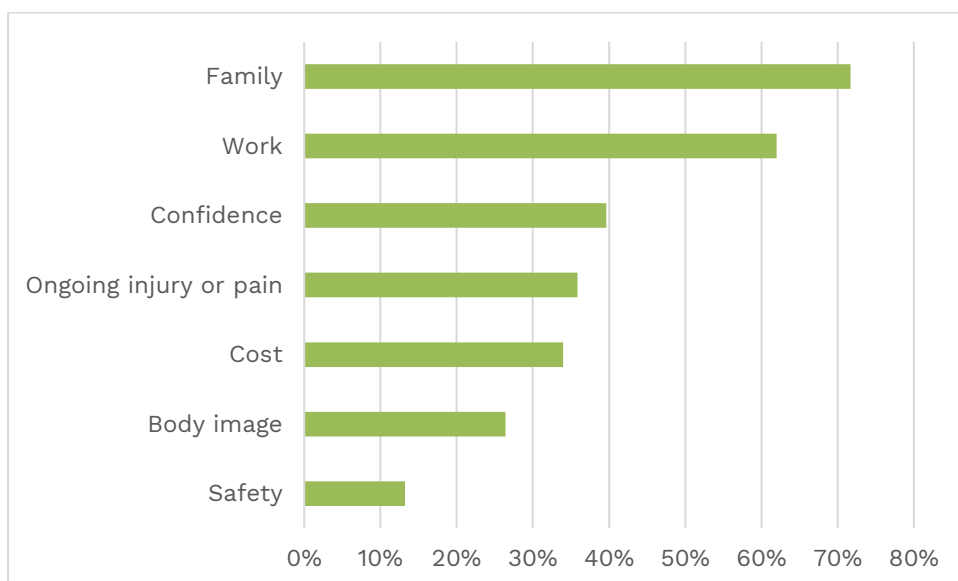


Figure 2 - Barriers to taking part in physical activity

¹ Gov.uk report

This was reflected in the conversations and feedback we received from people who took part in the research. They highlighted how time was a key issue.

'Having time is the ultimate barrier for me. Finding work/life balance is difficult so finding time for my physical fitness is also difficult' Rounders participant

They also identified how injury and ongoing pain and life experiences were important barriers.

'I have a back injury which gets worse I take part in sport. Light physical activity is OK. This is one of the reasons I had to stop playing Rounders' Rounders participant

'Life and commitments and general emotional level have made me less active' Rounders participant

People also identified there were cultural barriers to participating. Some women involved in the research identified a key barrier was male dominated spaces where men could see you playing. But also a lack of wider support to help raise awareness of the issues and get people engaging. They also identified how there were expectations on them to be present at family events, reducing the opportunities they have to play sport and be active.

'Male dominated [spaces are a barrier], very open space where everyone can see you playing' Rounders participant

'There wasn't much going on for women and girls at that time, so it would be either you're part of the boys team or you're not playing, so we were a bit unsure of that, so that is why I had to let go of cricket and then growing up you know it was okay to run and things because I'm not under, you know a certain influence, but it's been more family events, you are the eldest daughter you need to be there, and I'm like no but I need to play!' Rounders participant

'As a sports leader for the sports, other than financial costs, low engagement rates and lack of local support and venues are huge barriers. It is difficult to get ladies from the community engaged and committed to the sport for many reasons. Local support has been really low too, for example no real tangible support from local MP/council, or help with securing an outdoor venue at low/no cost' Rounders participant

Women were also clear that existing provision did not suit them. There was no provision that specifically catered for Asian women and provided them with an appropriate environment.

'All the way through till I was 16 I was very active, I was very much into sport, but when I finished school there wasn't a lot of provision for girls, specifically for Asian girls, so I didn't do anything after that, just basic walking. I only got back into sport when I heard about Rounders' Rounders participant

'There wasn't a sport I was able to do... and then I got married and I had kids that kind of took over my life so I stopped looking' Rounders participant

Women also identified how there was a general lack of awareness of what was available. Many of the women we spoke to in this research did not know there were opportunities to play competitive sport open to them. People were also unaware that Rounders was a sport they could play after they left school.

'It was a lack of awareness because even if it was there I didn't know about it' Rounders participant

'I always liked rounders, I played rounders at school, then when you leave school you just stop playing' Rounders participant

Improving levels of physical activity

The value of Rounders as a tool for tackling inactivity is shown by the data we collected through our research.

Figure 3 helps show that over half of the women who took up Rounders were not consistently active prior to regularly playing the sport (statements 1,4 and 5 in the chart below).

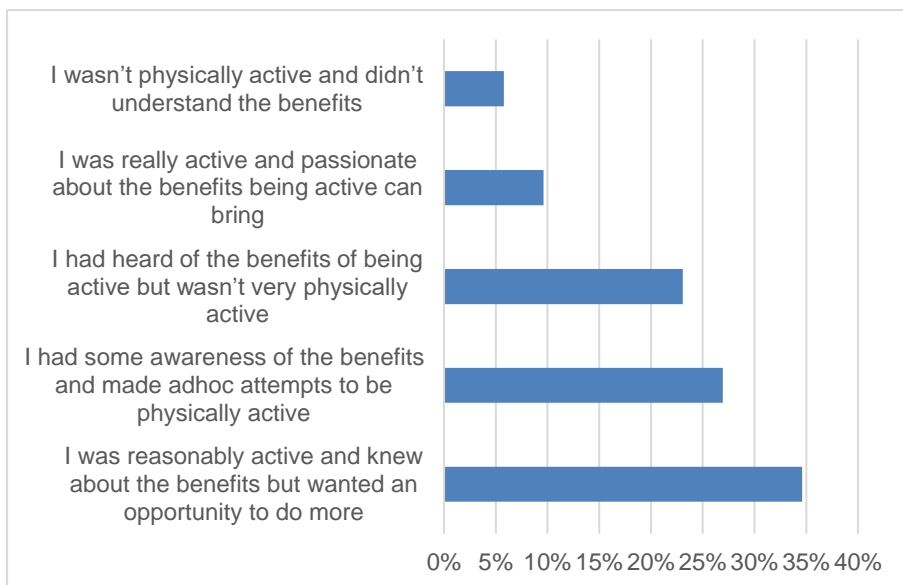


Figure 3 - Levels of physical activity before taking up Rounders

Rounders in West Yorkshire has also reached women who are new to the sport. Figure 4 helps show how well over 90% of those taking part in this research were new to Rounders.

Figure 4 - People's experience of Rounders prior to joining their team

Experience of playing Rounders	Number	Percentage
I already played Rounders regularly	2	4%
I had never played Rounders before	2	4%
I had some awareness of Rounders as a sport and had played occasionally	6	11%
I remember playing Rounders at school but had not played since	42	81%

Overcoming Barriers to be more active

Figure 5 shows how 76% of people have changed their activity levels as a result of being part of Rounders and this has led to more people being active.

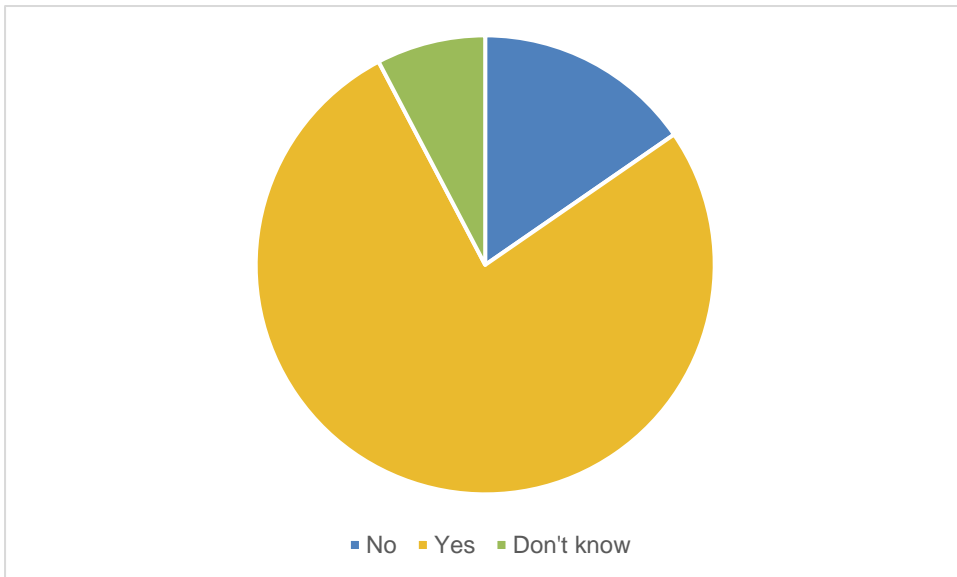


Figure 5 - People whose levels of physical activity has changed

People also identified how playing Rounders has made them more physically active with 88% agreeing that taking part in Rounders has made them more physically active, shown in Figure 6.

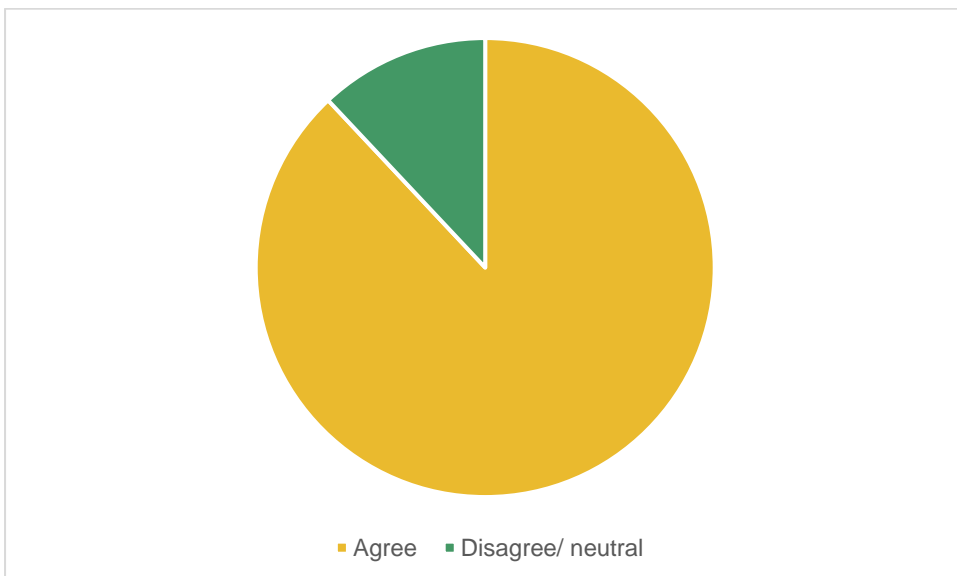


Figure 6 - People who agree their physical activity levels have increased

Women told us how the sport had created a reason and purpose to be active and to maintain those levels of physical activity and how Rounders motivated them to get fit in their wider lives.

'I used to play sports at school... so I was always called out for tournaments... throughout I used to walk and run, when I was working I couldn't access a sports team but I used to walk and run and then I was having my baby I was playing tennis... but I think now is when I am most active because when I joined rounders we networked and made lots of friends and the different rounders team, I play for Rounders England at the moment... I am really passionate about sport... because we've got a small family... I like to have those positive role models around her and there's lots in sports... so this is the moment in my life, I am nearly 40 and the last couple of years have been the most active I have been' Rounders participant

'It definitely makes me more aware of my fitness levels and I make more effort to stay fit' Rounders participant

'I became more physically active, I attended training sessions regularly so I was able to get a regular workout which I had struggled with after having kids. I also started doing more for myself including attending the gym at least twice a week on top of playing rounders' Rounders participant

'I was not active at all before, playing rounders and attending other various RSA sessions helped me get more active' Rounders participant

Rounders in West Yorkshire achieves these changes because it takes practical steps to overcome the barriers women face to taking part in sport.

There are opportunities for families to play together so women don't have to make a choice between being active and spending time with their families. The timing of sessions and matches is key to this. Rounders is also a relatively cheap sport to start with no specific costs to attend a session for the first time.

'There is a mum and daughters session, mum and daughters can go as well to basketball and she's like it's something nice for us to do... so then we started doing basketball with Rashida... and I was like, oh my god I can't believe I missed out on so many years, and it just came back to me straight away and I was just loving it, absolutely loving it and I met some women there and she was telling me about rounders on the Sunday and I was like 'oh I'll see' you know I didn't want to take too much on but then you know what I thought let's give it a try and I'm so glad' Rounders participant

'It wasn't expensive to join and fit in nicely to my family routine' Rounders participant

'I think the convenience factor, you know the time of night we play is good, we practice on Saturday mornings, which suits my schedule and my partner and our kids so that's quite appealing and its every week so it just feels like a habit, a good habit to build' Rounders participant

'Rounders practice and matches are always held at a fixed time so helps with organising myself to find the time. The competitiveness as well as the team spirit motivates me to go to sessions. As well as learning and developing new skills' Rounders participant

'It was a weekday and the other kids were at school so I took my little one in her push chair and went along and played for the afternoon and I really enjoyed myself' Rounders participant

'The Rounders sessions were at times which worked around the family and work commitments. I didn't know anyone when I first attended, however made some great friends which helped my confidence' Rounders participant

More features of Rounders

Rounders also has some important features that make it more accessible than other team sports.

First is that anyone, of any age can take part. This means grandmothers, mothers and daughters can all play together.

'It's nice to play and interact with people of all ages, especially those double my age. It helps me to understand that you can balance sports even when you have important family commitments i.e. when you're a mum' Rounders participant

It is also a sport that has many different elements to it: throwing, batting, bowling, running, tactics, umpiring. So everyone can find a niche and an area of the sport they are good at.

Perhaps less immediately obvious is when playing a competitive game there is plenty of time for rests. This means women returning from child birth, injury or a period of inactivity can still play the game because they can play at a pace that works for them and their current fitness levels.

'[the appeal?] I think it is the sport itself... it is not as strenuous and I know like with our fitness that we've been out for so long' Rounders participant

However, it is also an extremely tactical game. This means even if fitness levels have dropped someone can still be an integral part of the team helping other players think about when and how to run.

Finally, it can be played in single sex teams (but also in mixed teams) and there is no strict dress code. This means women can wear hijabs and can cover in a way that suits them. Rounders can take account of cultural and personal preferences. All aspects of the sport from training to competition can take place in a women only environment. Across West Yorkshire, the teams and leagues take account of this and consider how open a venue is before considering it for a competition.

Providing people with motivation

We also explored the motivations people experienced to being active and playing sport, shown in Figure 7.

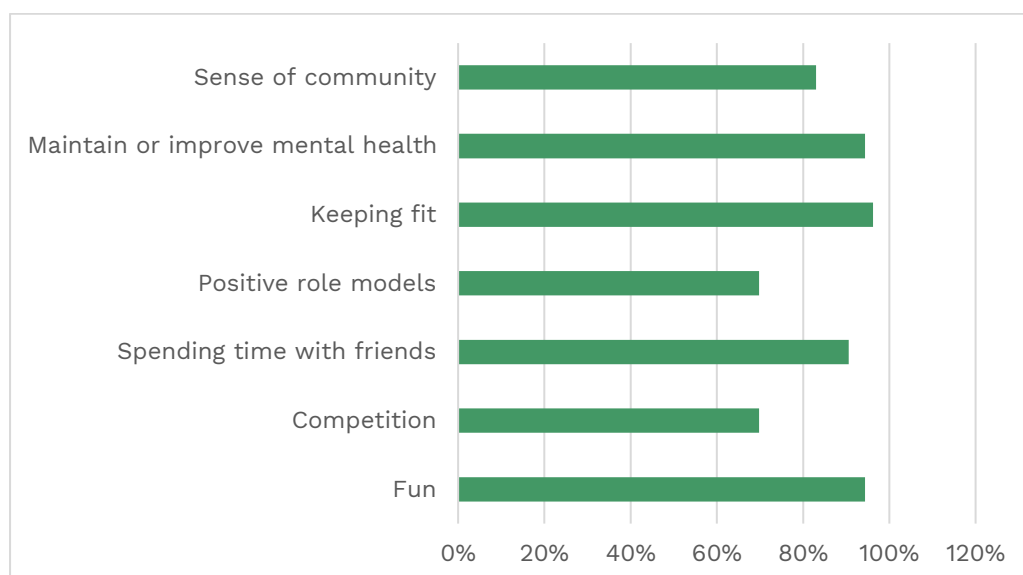


Figure 7 - Motivators for people to be active

What was clear from speaking to people involved in Rounders is the sport itself is a motivator for people to attend. Speaking to people involved in Rounders they identified how the training and matches provided them with time that was just for them.

'It is something I do for myself that I take time out for. After having 4 children and not having much time for much else when they were little I look forward to rounders as time out' Rounders participant

People were also motivated by being part of team.

'Being part of a team is a motivating factor. Winning as part of a team is a good motivating factor too' Rounders participant

Rounders as a sport also offers an opportunity for people who enjoyed sports at school but have since not had the opportunity to be part of a team. It motivates people by offering them the opportunity to be active in a group.

'I used to do every sports club after school, from junior school all the way to high school, so I would try any sport, the only sport I couldn't get was Volleyball. Besides that I was on every single team....but as soon as I left school I didn't really get involved in anything at all and then I went to college and I went to uni, again, no sports, nothing. When I left uni, I joined the gym but I am not a gym person, I just don't enjoy it so I only did that for a little while... then I moved to Yorkshire... I was just busy, like having kids working and to be honest I didn't know there was anything around in terms of sports or women being active I just knew about gyms' Rounders participant

Thinking about competition

Our research has highlighted that competition plays an important role in motivating women to take part in Rounders and to train and improve. Even people who thought they would not be competitive get involved as their confidence increases.

'I actually thrive [on the competition] you know when I hear about a match, I'm like, yes, I want to play. You know before when I started Rounders I was like a bit like, I'm not gonna play any matches they said 'okay that's fine' I don't really want to play, I just want to watch, I just want to train and just take part. But then, once I got a taste for it, that was it, I was hooked on, and now I just like I really really look forward to it when we have a match on, I'll kind of plan my whole day around the match' Rounders participant

'The competition helps me to get better as player, without the competition it becomes very much the same thing... you have that bit of healthy pressure, it helps to build you as a strong person' Rounders participant

'You don't know until you try it, it might be a bit daunting at first, I am not always very confident, but then playing rounders, when it came to my first match I was very nervous.. but I really enjoyed it, I surprised myself, people don't know until they try it' Rounders participant

Those involved in the research did identify that cultural expectations still exist around competitive sport that they in turn challenge. But that Rounders as a sport was flexible enough to allow them to play in a way the women wanted to.

'[I still hear] Why are you doing that, why don't you just go to the gym and that is very much a South Asian mindset and it is a very difficult barrier to overcome.. I still get that comment now five years on but I just don't pay any mind to it anymore...because it is a kind of old style of thinking in that women should be in the home, doing homely things or not really doing anything that's a competition it is too out there, whereas I feel competition is quite healthy... I am still able to be myself, I am still able to cover, I am still able to be who I want to be. And play and I can be me and be a sports person. There has never been any issues with us covering and I think that was my biggest thing about being able to cover up, because I have never had that issue I have never seen it as an issue' Rounders participant

'I grew up with people who are very sporty, it depends on your background and your culture because sometimes people get confused with culture and religion.. they think that is where the problem may lie, but my parents never had a problem, I still come and play we have Muslim women who come and play, I don't think that is a problem I think we should be diverse and that is a very important thing to have' Rounders participant

'Women in sport empowerment - my mum's generation would never take part in competitive sport and things like the RSA league give women a platform, provide a safe space and help break down cultural barriers' Rounders participant

'Increase in confidence and a real sense of belonging in the community as I didn't grow up here. I'm breaking South Asian barriers (or trying anyway) and showing them that there are places for women to be other than the kitchen and the bedroom' Rounders participant

Understanding Rounders as a tool to tackle inactivity

Rounders is an accessible sport. It is tactical and has many different skills so most people can find a niche in the sport. However it also has some key features that make it more accessible than other sports. It can be played by people returning to fitness, anyone of any age can take part and people can wear what suits them.

The sport helps overcome some of the barriers to being active by giving women something they can prioritise and it provides a motivator by providing a fun, enjoyable group session. It also provides women with the opportunity to be

competitive, reawakening the competitive spirit they felt in childhood. However, to achieve this, women need to be aware of what is available in their community.

Competition is important as it provides a tool and a motivator for people to take part and to improve. But people need confidence to be competitive.

Sport for Development

As well as having a positive impact on physical activity, we have seen through the development of Rounders in West Yorkshire that Rounders can be used as a tool for wider impacts. This includes improving the wellbeing of participants and improving community cohesion.

Reaching traditionally disengaged groups

Rounders in West Yorkshire reaches a diverse audience that are traditionally under-represented in sport and physical activity.

All those involved in our research have been women. As Figure 8 shows, nearly half are between 35 and 44. This helps show how Rounders is able to reach people of all ages.

Figure 8 - Age range of research participants

Age	Number	Percentage
16 - 24	7	13%
25 - 34	14	26%
35 - 44	23	43%
45 - 54	8	15%

A fifth (10 people) identified as having a long term illness and we found the working status of participants included 31% who were employed full time and 14% employed part time. 6 people described themselves as White British. The remainder identified as a variety of ethnic groups including: Indian; Kashmiri; Pakistani; Pakistani British; British Asian; British Indian; South Asian; White and Asian. 78% (37) identified as having an Islamic or Muslim faith.

All this data helps illustrate how Rounders is reaching a diverse audience who are often the target of sport for development initiatives.

Improving community connections and mental health

It is clear that women are benefiting from the opportunity to play Rounders beyond just being more active. Figure 9 shows the wider benefits people report from taking part in Rounders. Perhaps the most important finding from our research is that 95% of people who are taking part in Rounders have met someone

from a different background. This helps illustrate how the sport is helping to bring people from different communities together.

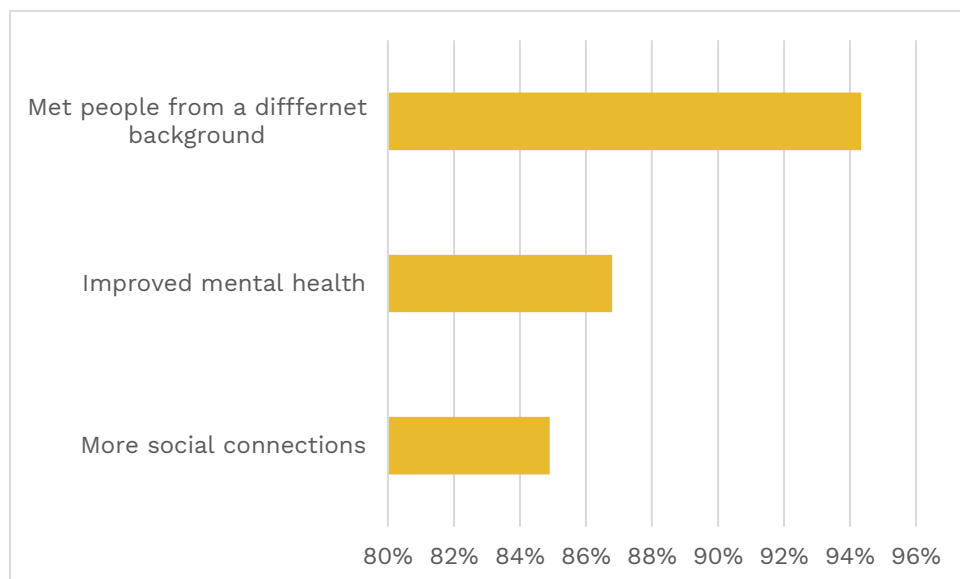


Figure 9 - Wider impacts of taking part in Rounders

The women involved in our research highlighted how it provided them with a sense of purpose and a social aspect. They also identified how the team aspect provided them with a sense of belonging.

'It keeps me a sense of purpose outside of my usual responsibilities, it gives me more confidence' Rounders participant

'I enjoy competitive outdoor sports and I think Rounders provides that exercise but also the social aspect as well' Rounders participant

'[I enjoy] the sense of belonging and having fun at the same time' Rounders participant

Much of our research also took place in the Batley and Spenningsdale constituency which has experienced the tragic death of Jo Cox. Providing opportunities for people to play Rounders in their communities helps bring pride to communities representing their home towns.

'If people are out there representing their town they feel more accountable about what is going on in their town and feel more pride and association with their home town' Rounders stakeholder

The competition element gives people an extra incentive to take part. Women referenced how they felt like they were letting people down if they didn't go and play and so they prioritised taking part.

'League matches are competitive and the sense of letting down your team means you prioritise the rounders, inadvertently prioritising yourself'
Rounders participant

'They force me to come out as I've committed myself to play & don't want to let anyone down' Rounders participant

Women also identified how the sessions supported them with their mental health. This was directly through feeling better as a result of being active.

'Attending sessions definitely improves my mental health, every time I come back from a session I feel much better and it motivates me to carry on'
Rounders participant

But it is also because it provides women with an identity and is something they do just for them.

'And then you know it just became part of my life, like now I live for it, it is the only thing that is actually mine' Rounders participant

'Now I feel like I have my own set of friends and I think for me, that's the most important thing is belonging to something and having my own friends and family and that we share the same passion. We all meet for the same reason, we have such a good laugh and you get healthy and fit at the same time' Rounders participant

For some women, Rounders has been able to help them through some of the most difficult parts of their lives.

'[it has helped] my mental health. When I lost my little boy last year rounders kept me sane when I was suicidal, being in the fresh air and communicating in a group instead of hiding away which I did for nearly a year' Rounders participant

'My sister had a still born recently and wouldn't go near people - until rounders came along and they are so supportive of her and I love the difference in her health and well being and to see her smile again when [playing Rounders]!' Rounders participant

It has also supported women to feel more confident and experience the wider benefits this can then bring to their lives.

'Being involved in Rounders has helped me feel more confident going out with my children and playing with them in the park and in public...previously I didn't feel confident playing with them' Rounders participant

'I'm definitely more confident, if you had spoken to me five years ago I would not have spoken a lot....I was the quietest person there, I had no confidence in my abilities I was at a very low point in my life, it was due to bullying, poor mental health, quite a few things, so when I first started I didn't think I could do it and over the years I have played more and with the encouragement of people both within the team and outside the team.. that has built my confidence' Rounders participant

Understanding Rounders as a sport for development tool

Rounders is a sport that is appealing to groups who are traditionally disengaged from sport. It reaches women of all ages but particularly those from an Asian background and those that are the target for sport for development activities.

There is also considerable evidence that Rounders can act as a Sport for Development tool. Our research has helped show it brings communities together and helps people meet others from a different background. It also provides people with a sense of purpose and focus, this in turn helps build social connections and improve mental health.

Making it work

Rounders has grown organically in West Yorkshire but there have been important interventions that have helped the sport grow. This includes having a local, trusted organisation who has actively promoted Rounders and created opportunities for teams to compete informally. There has also been a strong culture of supporting people to progress either in the sport or in the administration of the sport.

The role of a trusted organisation

The Rounders teams are self-organising and the teams all manage themselves. However, a local organisation, Ready Steady Active has played an important role supporting women from South Asian communities in West Yorkshire to be active.

This has involved offering women the opportunity to play sport in women only environments, at times that suit them and sports they enjoy. This has included Rounders but also includes basketball, football and more traditional aerobics and circuit training.

Ready Steady Active has also used small pots of money to offer starter sessions, so people can try Rounders for the first time since school. They also run informal leagues and tournaments so people can develop their competitive skills in a safe and friendly environment.

Ready Steady Active could signpost people they connected to through their wider sports development work to Rounders teams. They could also provide mentoring and support to help people running the clubs.

'In celebration of international women's day an event was held and at the event Rashida spoke about Ready Steady Active. After which I joined the taster sessions and from there joined Batley Ninjas, as a few of their players attended too' Rounders participant

The importance of this trusted relationship is shown in Figure 10. Nearly half of people involved in our work had become involved through a connection with Ready Steady Active, a further 38% found out through word of mouth.

'I saw the teams playing a match near my house and I decided to speak to one of the members to find out how I can get involved. She was super friendly and gave me all of the information' Rounders participant

In total, 90% of people became involved in Rounders because of a trusted connection recommending they should take part in the sport.

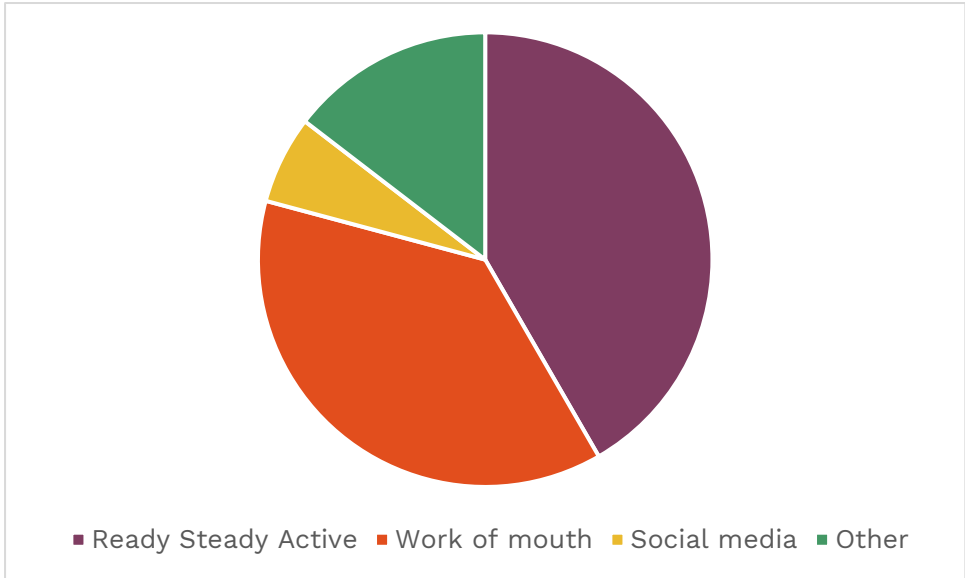


Figure 10 - How people found out about Rounders

Another important feature of Ready Steady Active is it has been working in this area for 9 years. They offer a longevity to their presence around the sport. This is hugely important as the women involved in the research identified it could take them months to pick up the courage to attend their first session.

*‘It took me about six months to finally get the courage to ask about it’
Rounders participant*

Progression

One of the features of Rounders in West Yorkshire is that it has grown organically as people have been encouraged to progress in the sport. Figure 11 shows the progressions people involved in this research has made. It helps show how nearly two thirds of people have progressed in some way in the sport with 40% training to be a coach, leader or umpire. Supporting and encouraging people to access this training is a key part and role of the trusted organisation.

Figure 11 - Progressions of people involved in Rounders

Been involved with the following	Number	Percentage of all respondents
Consulted on views	10	19%
Progress to grassroots rounders club	5	9%
Train as a leader/coach/umpire	21	40%

Been involved with the following	Number	Percentage of all respondents
Total (unique number)	33	62%

The value of supporting these progression opportunities is clear. For some it has increased their understanding of the game.

'And then I did the umpiring course as well, so I've qualified as an umpire... and you know what doing the umpiring course, has actually helped me to play better because I understand the game so much better, understand the rules so much better... but if you know the rules as well you can take advantage of an opportunity' Rounders participant

'I am a qualified level 2 coach and help to coach both the adult team, Batley Ninjas, as well as the junior team, Batley Ninjettes. I am also due to take my test to qualify as an intermediate level umpire, currently qualified as a preliminary umpire' Rounders participant

'I have co-managed BatGirls Rounders Club from its inception. I spend many many volunteer hours to help achieve this. I am now a Regional Coach, National Coach and Tutor for Rounders England. BatGirls Rounders Club players play in local leagues, all the way through to playing at elite level for Rounders England as part of the 2023 Talent Squad' Rounders participant

For others, it has meant they have helped grow the game by creating new teams and providing opportunities for children to play competitively.

'I have helped coach a new team in Huddersfield, I regularly umpire for WYRL and have helped in tournaments for children' Rounders participant

Progressing in the sport has also supported people with their own personal development.

'My confidence has increased immensely. I feel confident enough to help others learn how to play, to the extent I have been able to qualify as a level 2 coach. I feel better in myself which in turn helps me with better focus in other areas such as work and family. Rounders has also helped me to stay active and be able to keep up with my 2 boys!' Rounders participant

'I have developed as a strong sports leader as part of my rounders journey. I am now a Regional Coach, National Umpire and Tutor for Rounders England. I have picked up strong leadership skills including management, negotiation,

motivation, mentoring, and navigating difficult situations and being a role model' Rounders participant

Key Learning

Rounders is a surprisingly powerful sports development tool. It is an accessible sport. The game's structure means people who are returning to physical activity can take part, as there are plenty of rest periods. It has numerous different elements, so most people can find a niche. It also has a broad dress code and can take place in a women only environment so cultural preferences can be easily accommodated.

Tackling Inactivity

Throughout our research into sport and physical activity we have found that levels of physical activity are not static. In other words throughout our lives we are moving through periods where we are more active and we are less active. This research into women playing rounders also helped highlight that cultural expectations change over time. Women in their 40s and 50s now were subject to different expectations growing up to women in their 20's now.

This means when the sports development sector is thinking about projects and programmes to tackle inactivity they need to think not just about current experiences and attitudes to inactivity but also historical experiences and attitudes. In other words barriers and motivators are not fixed, they depend on a person's age and experience. But to engage people, these need to be considered and Rounders can provide the women only spaces that allow people to take part.

Rounders also offers people the opportunity to return to competitive sport. For many of the women involved in this research they had enjoyed competitive sport at school and Rounders provided them with a route back into something they enjoyed. The enjoyment and fun helped them prioritise Rounders over the work and family commitments that act as a barrier.

The benefits of being part of Rounders then become clear with a positive impact on physical activity.

Sport for Development

Rounders can also be used as a Sport for Development tool. It has the ability to reach groups that other activities struggle with, in particular Asian women. This is a group that is hard to engage in sporting activities. But the experience in West Yorkshire shows the benefits of this are much greater than being more active.

West Yorkshire has helped show how an active Rounders community will bring people with different backgrounds and cultures together into a shared experience.

This shared experience then helps increase understanding between different people and different cultures.

Playing as part of a Rounders team gives people a sense of purpose and increased social connections which in turn improves their health and wellbeing.

Replicating success

West Yorkshire has shown a Rounders community will grow organically. A local, trusted organisation in Ready Steady Active helped kick start teams and competition. Crucially they understood the local area, had longevity that went beyond various pots of money and from day one worked in an encouraging and supportive way so a culture of progressing both in the sport and the sports delivery was developed from the start.

To develop Rounders in your community consider the following elements:

- Work with an existing local organisation who has good links with the community and has longevity. They can then be supported to offer and develop Rounders. The research has shown it can take up to 6 months for a woman to feel confident joining a group, so an organisation that has visibility and longevity in an area is key
- But be mindful of cultural preferences. Ensure there is a women only environment available. Make it clear the dress code is flexible and get the right representation on marketing materials to support this
- Organise sessions that work around family and work commitments of the community you are working with. Explore if actively promoting activities like mother and daughter sessions will help people engage
- Don't always start with all the Rounders rules, allow for entry level participation and don't always play the full game straight away
- Be wary of stereotyping. The women involved in this research were and are competitive. Although people might not want to compete on day 1, it is likely as confidence increases, so too will their competitive spirit
- Put as much focus on the social side of training sessions as the physical activity and skills development. Book the space to allow for 20 minutes before and after the session for people to get together and spend time with each other
- When delivering or coaching the sessions, focus on the people in the group and look at how you can develop the social connections in the group. Help shy people connect to other people and put a focus on making people feel good about the progressions they have made
- From the first day a session starts or people join think about how they can progress in the sport and in delivering the sessions. This means gently

pushing people outside of their comfort zone and building a relationship of trust so they are happy to try different things

- Once a session is established, actively encourage those people taking part to act as ambassadors for the sport. Encourage posting on social media and getting them to bring in their friends and family

