

July 2021

Our Journey (so far)



tif
TACKLING
INEQUALITIES
FUND



About *tif*

The Tackling Inequalities Fund was launched in April 2020 in response to Covid-19, providing £20m of National Lottery funding from Sport England to support community groups across the country.

The purpose of the fund is to help these local groups continue to exist and engage with people throughout the pandemic, and during the early recovery stages, with a view to keeping them active and connected.

The fund has focused on the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19, to try and prevent the inequalities gap from widening and minimise the impact on activity levels.

This includes:

- Culturally diverse communities
- Those on low incomes
- People with long term health conditions
- Disabled people

This is a story of how we all came together at a time when we all had to stay apart, to create real connections, with real people, to support them to be active when it was needed the most.

Together, we are tackling inequalities



Our Story

2020 and the pandemic shook things up for everyone. Rethinking approaches and finding new ways to bring about positive change had to happen almost overnight.

We all understand that at a time when so many people feel alone, making human connections is invaluable.

And creating these connections with the communities and people who need it most – and fast! – really matters.

Unique times like these call for a unique approach – working flexibly and collaboratively, and not being afraid to challenge the status quo.

This is the story of TIF and the journey we're all on together.

It's a story of breaking down barriers, tackling inequalities and inactivity head on, and above all, rejoicing in the incredible resilience of our communities.

Despite the challenges, we've had a real impact through working with people, right across the country.

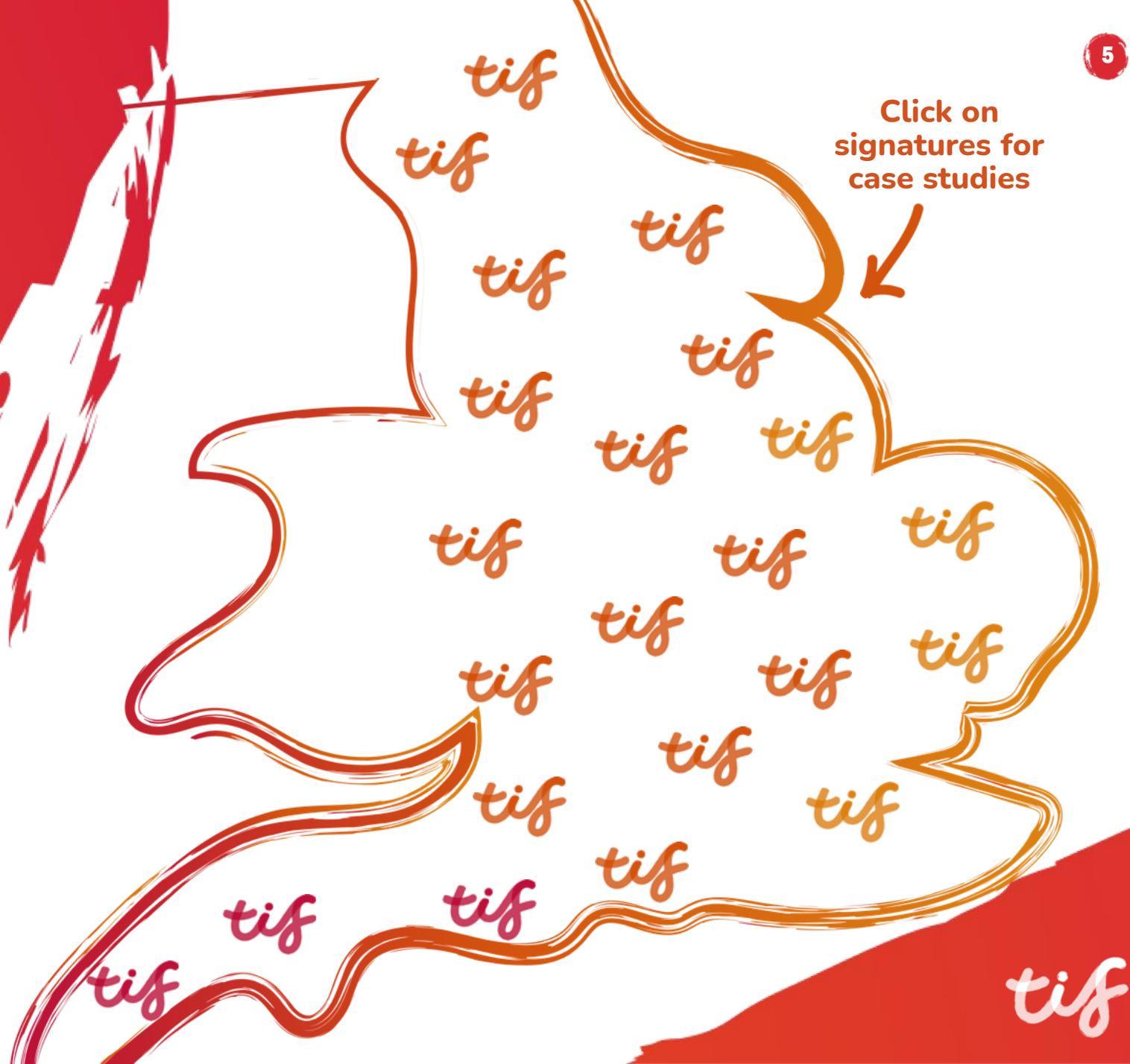
And the journey continues – we're still learning, still evolving and still encouraging others to join us.

In a world of new normals, we're finding our way.

tif together,
people make
it possible



We've connected with over 3,000 organisations right across the country



Click on signatures for case studies

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Section 1

How we've worked

Rethinking approaches and finding new ways to bring about positive change

Shared purpose

Trusting relationships

Collaborative learning

Flexible working

Shared purpose

The purpose of TIF was clear from the start. A simple, clear mission brought us together and gave us a clear reason to collaborate.

This purpose united us:

- Locally as we worked with communities with the clear purpose of enabling people to be active and connected
- Within our organisations as teams pulled together on something tangible and focused at a time when 'business as usual' no longer existed
- Nationally as system partners as we adapted and improved through what we learned together

The purpose gave us reason to do things differently and to reach out to work with communities and people that were new to us. It helped create relationships that will endure way beyond our work with TIF.

Things to think about

A shared purpose, put simply, is a shared mission. It inspires and creates permission to do the things that really matter. Identifying your shared purpose with colleagues and partners from the outset, clearly communicating this and returning to it throughout will help you to keep your work focused and on track.

Having a common purpose made it easy for partners with such different roles to come together through TIF because we were all seeking to achieve the same thing through our own lens and the connections we each have into communities.

**Ross and Declan,
Cycling UK**

(TIF gave) our team something really focused and tangible to work on during lockdown. It has really helped us engage with new organisations who work directly with the target audiences and is providing a lasting legacy of ensuring physical activity is embedded in their practices/services long term.

Nicola, Active Humber



Trusting relationships

Building and creating relationships, at all levels, are at the heart of everything we do.

We've built connections... between Sport England, Active Partnerships, National Partners and the community sector organisations they support - all with the aim of sharing learnings and working as a team.

And we've built trust... at every level, by listening and being close to the people in the communities. All this has helped to empower and support them and has been core to TIF's success.

Working in this way has enabled us to build an even stronger relationship between our Active Partnership and Sport England. We've all been able to build and adapt this project together, sharing ideas, challenging and supporting each other every step of the way.

Something that has been really important to me is how approachable you (and others) have been throughout. I was relatively new to Active Partnerships and Sport England were sort of this big monolithic thing - this whole process has really humanised SE for me!!

Emma, Energise Me

Things to think about

An environment with trust at the heart creates a safe space for openness and honesty. This can lead to a greater understanding of what is working and help to identify things which can be done differently.

Trust is built over time, through meaningful conversations, leading to shared understanding.

Collaborative learning

Working collaboratively with sector partners both nationally and locally has genuinely deepened our understanding of the people we're seeking to support.

And by sharing our approaches, insights and solutions, we've provided support to one another too – opening up the channels of communication to make it easier to talk to those who know our audiences best, understand the challenges and can help with developing bespoke approaches.

Together we've worked out the best ways of working and we'll continue to do so.

Things to think about

We all learn a lot every day. Learning together, national and local side by side, is key to genuine collaboration.

Learning has an intrinsic value. It can motivate and provide comfort when working within uncertainty. It should be valued as much as the work itself.

TIF has allowed us to create the space to truly listen to partners, collaboratively develop opportunities and sustain physical activity in a place. We've had the time to understand how projects connect to a system and join up conversations strategically. It has allowed us to have wider conversations instead of reducing relationships with partners to a project or programme.

Ruth, Wesport

One of the best bits of TIF has been the shared learning. No one person or organisation can be an expert but together we can build a picture of what we are hearing and what is working that helps us all play our part a little better.

Wendy, Sport England



Flexible working

We've learned that being flexible and open-minded about how we work and how our internal processes run helps us to break down barriers and achieve our goals faster and more efficiently.

TIF isn't about ticking boxes and filling in forms; it's about focusing on day-to-day work that makes an impact and creating flexible team structures and work plans.

We've remained agile and open to change. We have not been afraid to stop, think and review at pace as the need continues to evolve.

Every small step makes a difference.

Sport England's approach to working with local and regional partners is very welcome: we are trusted to deliver with our local expertise, knowledge and relationships. This approach enables agile, innovative and high impact delivery. We hope that such leadership will be adopted in other programmes so that public funds have the maximum reach and impact for diverse people and communities.

Mark, Voscur

Things to think about

Ways of working, processes and governance should be designed to be as sensitive as possible to the people we are trying to support, to help them engage with the support as easily as possible.

Longstanding ways of doing things might not be what is needed. Being open to adapting and changing direction requires us to embrace flexible working.

I think that Sport England encourages external input, learns from its evaluation and acts on it.

Anna, Disability Rights UK

As for the program of funding I don't think I'd change anything. Our organisation has had some very difficult and unkind application processes, especially during this whole covid situation. This particular fund for us (TIF) was one of very few stress free processes that actually came through and helped us when and how we needed it to.

Warrior Martial Arts



As this work is so much about human connections, we have had to think differently about how we understand and share the impact and learning we are creating together

We've focused on creating opportunities for everyone involved to tell their own story of how TIF is making a difference, we kept in touch through Microsoft Teams and open calls every few weeks to share what we were seeing and hearing and when we came across big problems or challenges, we learned together and we created spaces to explore what we each knew e.g. impact of lockdown.

Our process management tools (for example; capturing information on audience, activity, place & need through our shared smartsheet) were all designed to help us capture what is happening without needing additional systems. This helped us to respond quickly to changing and challenging times.

Bringing together the story of our work and the impact it had, painted a picture of what really mattered for the voices of the people doing the work to be heard.



Section 2

We've seen an impact on

The role of physical activity in people's health and wellbeing

Survival of community organisations

Those who needed it most

People's quality of life

The role of physical activity in people's health & wellbeing

Many of the community organisations that TIF has supported do not have sport and physical activity as a core purpose.

They exist for a wide variety of reasons and have the audience and their needs at the heart of what they do.

During COVID-19, they have seen the value of physical activity on their audiences lives and we are seeing examples of:



A greater understanding of the benefit of physical activity to individuals has changed attitudes towards this.



Increased confidence amongst non sporting organisations to include physical activity as part of their wider offer.



Upskilling of the local paid and voluntary workforce to deliver physical activity and to advocate for its benefits.



Organisations starting to invest their own funding in physical activity.



The survival of community organisations

Our sector partners have been able to reach out to vital local community organisations at a time when they were struggling and the impact of this has been significant:

Reassurance

Provided reassurance and confirmation of the importance of their work.

Confidence

Organisations could be confident that somebody cared about what they do.

Adapting

Helped with providing ideas about how to navigate the ever-changing government guidance and how to adapt activity accordingly.

Covering costs

Helped organisations to remain viable and operational through cash grants to cover running costs at a time where they had no source of income.

Personal support

Provided a personal source of support at a time when they had nowhere else to turn, many organisations reached are often overlooked or disconnected from relevant support agencies.



The survival of community organisations

(Continued)

Empowerment

Empowered organisations to do new things and to expand the services they provide.

Building organisations

Helped to build the capacity and governance of many of the organisations reached.

Learning & resources

Connected organisations to each other locally to share learning and resources.

Developing skills

Developed the skills and capability of the volunteers within community organisations.

Future funding

Built confidence in the organisations that will allow them to apply to a wider range of funding sources in the future.

Connections

Helped organisations remain connected to the people they exist to serve.



Section 2: we've seen an impact on



The story of families

Grit Lechworth's story

Rural Moves, story

We've made more connections in more communities

We worked in different ways to make sure support and funding got to where it was needed most. Sport England reached out to partners because together we could connect with more people and places than any of us could do alone. Every partner involved used the connections that they had to understand what was needed most, to enable people to be active during extraordinary and isolating times. Many new connections were also made, and we are excited to build upon these further in the future.

The work we did together helped to make sure that the vital community organisations that exist all across England were able to adapt their offer and continue operating at a time when it felt impossible. This amazing network enabled people of all ages, abilities, genders and ethnicities to be active and feel connected as restrictions were imposed and lockdowns lifted. This rich diversity has made TIF feel very special.

People's quality of life

We ensured community groups were able to keep in touch with individuals throughout the various lockdowns, improving people's quality of life during a very difficult time.

Here are some of the ways we have made a positive impact:



Reconnected people where they were isolated

Significant boost to mental health

Motivated people to keep moving and in turn reduced anxiety levels

Provided people with confidence to re-engage with activity where they had been scared to leave their homes



Helped families be active together

Given bespoke support from a trusted and known local source

Empowered people keep active independently when opportunities became limited

Section 3

We've also learnt

As our journey continues, we continue to learn and evolve

One size doesn't fit all

Trust takes time

Digital helps some but not all

A little goes a long way

Not being prescriptive with solutions but letting the voice of the community come through in determining what is needed, working at their pace.

**Kathryn,
Yorkshire Sport Foundation**

One size doesn't fit all

We've seen that even within the same target audience, having bespoke solutions is key. People don't fit in boxes and what works for one audience in one place will not always be successful elsewhere.

If we dig deeper into place, we can create better solutions. By taking a hyperlocal approach, we can understand more about each community and better address their needs. We have found local partner intelligence has added huge value to our own.

Since most receiving funding were not previously known to Sport England, we've also come to realise that reaching our audience requires new connections and a new approach. We need to go there and not expect them to come to us.

Many of the organisations that applied were new and had limited knowledge of the sector but realised that, for their target audience, the use of Sport and Physical Activity could alleviate some of the impact caused by Covid - 19.

Kirsty, Sport England

Trust takes time

Trust between Sport England, Active Partnerships and National Partners and community sector organisations takes time to build, but it is also the most important currency we have.

We've learnt that having the right workforce is vital in establishing trust. If we are going to tackle inequalities effectively, the workforce has to connect with the target audience. They need to trust the delivery organisation, and that can take time.

Building trust is absolutely crucial to this- Trust is gained through being present in our communities and ensuring that we work to meet the needs of local agenda's.

Jo, Active Devon

Trust is key to this working well, not only creating trust between the delivery organisation and the end audience but the trust from us to our partners.

Simon, Sport England

GYMNOVA



Digital helps some but not all

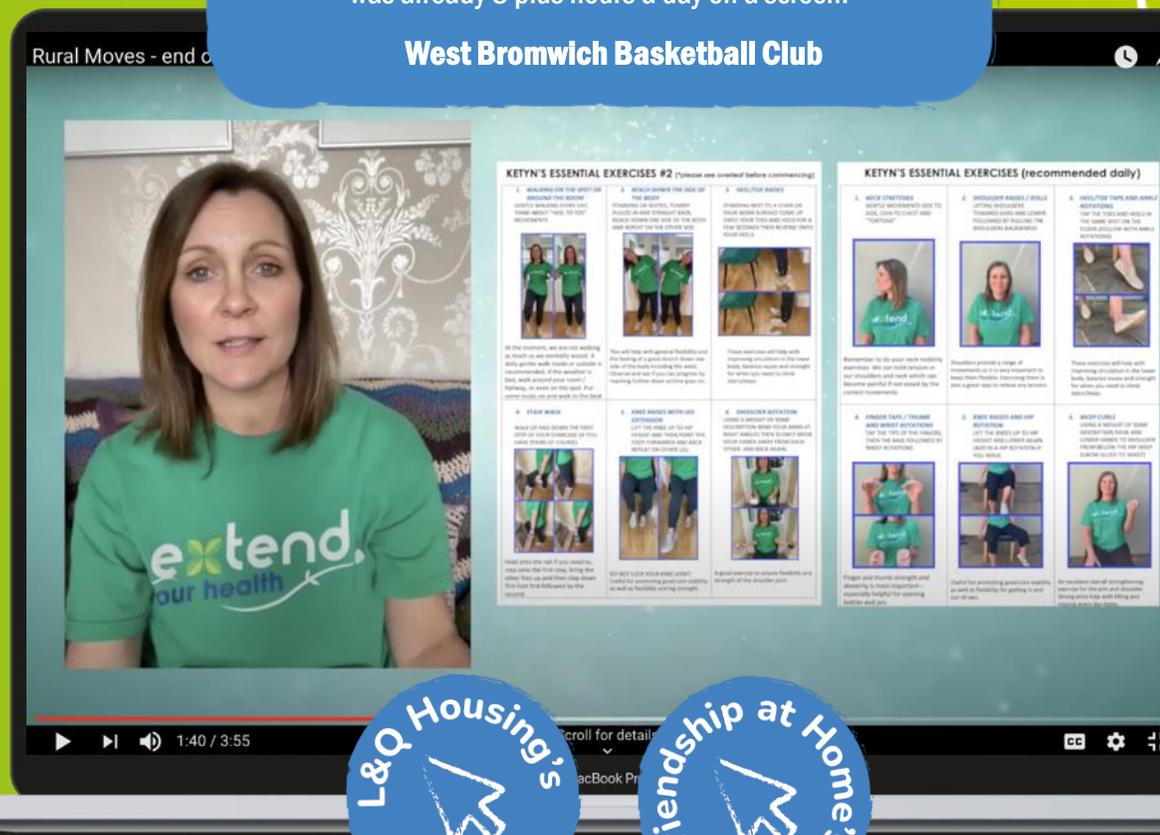
Digital offers have worked well for some audiences but not others and we've seen that digital fatigue is real. There is still a clear need for face to face offers.

Innovative use of technology has allowed organisations to connect to their audience throughout the pandemic and it has played a vital role in reducing social isolation and increasing activity levels.

However, for others, it has widened the divide, as a lack of WiFi, data, equipment and/or skills has left some audiences even more isolated than before.

The challenge at our club has been keeping everyone motivated and engaged...we are conscious of the amount of screen time young people were having in a day through education, as a club our moral dilemma was adding to what was already 8 plus hours a day on a screen.

West Bromwich Basketball Club



Your Zoom classes are the only thing that is keeping me sane. Not to be able to step outside my front door (Covid Rules and my family's orders) I really do look forward to your classes. I miss the social life that the actual exercise classes give and can not wait to get back to them but in the meantime please keep the classes going as they are what keeps me going and not going insane.
Thanking you from the bottom of my heart for everything you do for us.

Participant from a pulmonary rehab exercise class



A little goes a long way

With the average TIF award being just under £3,500, we've found that organisations have not actually needed a lot of money to stay afloat or to stay connected.

Many Active Partnerships and National Partners are also receiving requests for help that do not involve money at all and instead are seeking advice, connections or help in solving problems.

TIF has provided the opportunity to start conversations that have a much wider impact, opening doors that were previously closed to our sector partners and acting as a catalyst for change.

About the wider support beyond the money – to be received on Monday from Active Black Country.

Accelerate Youth Running Club

It makes a massive difference – it means we can offer support to the most vulnerable in our communities who would otherwise remain isolated.

Rob, Active Cornwall



This is just the start of the story

We are only part way through the TIF journey and we will continue to learn, as we to find our way in a world of new normals. As the impact of COVID continues to evolve, so do the challenges that we face. It doesn't end here, and neither does our work together.



...and here are some of the people we've worked with so far to help make it happen!

