

# The Big Interview

JOURNAL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

## Double award win for charity is 'extremely rewarding'

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**A sports, education and wellbeing charity claimed a double award win at this year's Journal Business Awards as its team rose to the challenge of delivering services online.**

Inspire+ were named Business of the Year, as well as winning the inaugural Covid-19 Bounce Back award, sponsored by Oldrids and Downtown, and Iliffe Media respectively.

After planned services were suspended by lockdown, Inspire+ offered its coaches and ambassadors to schools for free to continue to virtually encourage mental and physical wellbeing in children.

A highlight for the organisation was delivering its annual 'Mini Olympics' virtually to great success.

CEO Vincent Brittain and operations manager Chris Graves offered an insight into what it meant to win the awards and what is next for Inspire+.

**How did it feel to win the award after a tough year?**

It has been wonderful to receive recognition. As a charity we provide services and support to the local schools and community not to win awards or recognition but to have a positive impact on young people. However, after a very testing year for everyone, it has been extremely rewarding to be recognised for our small contribution.

It's a proud feeling as a charity to be recognised but even more so that our staff's efforts are rewarded for their continued hard work and dedication. Our work is done in partnership with our schools, if it wasn't for the support and dedication of school staff our impact wouldn't be nearly as great. We feel school staff should also take recognition for this award as they have been at the forefront of supporting young people and families through the last year.

**Why do you think you stood out to the judges?**

Aside from our passion to serve and support our local communities, we believe

adaptability made us stand out. Our normal operating model is 100% face to face, in schools working with the teachers, children and families.

When the first lockdown started in March 2020 we wanted to live up to our mantra and turn a negative into a positive! Having immediately turned our attention to virtual delivery we were soon able to offer our full membership of services through live virtual alternatives whilst still giving face to face coaching for those schools needing the support.

One of our proudest examples of this was the annual Mini Olympics. An event that sees over 2500 young people attend across three days we turned into a completely virtual event. The positive from this meant that rather than just a class or year group taking part the whole school could be involved either at home or in school. On the day we had over 11,000 hits on social media and over 60 hours of virtual content participated in!

The charities education team also continued to go



From left: Sophie Allen, Micky Walkden and Chris Graves filming an exercise video.

the extra mile to ensure our apprenticeship cohorts had the best experiences possible and highest impact in their schools supporting the challenges faced. This is testament to the apprentice tutors for their adaptability and personal approach to each learner and school.

**Tell us a bit about what you do as a business?**

Inspire+ are a school sport, health, wellbeing & education charity. Now in our 10th year of operation we have developed from a sports charity to using sport as a vehicle to upskill school staff and impact children's health, wellbeing and wider learning. We work with over 50 local Primary and Secondary schools with services which include; specialist coaching, CPD, mentoring, inspirational sporting ambassador assemblies and workshops, leadership and talented athlete development programmes. We are very proud of our leadership pathway that if children wish can form a pathway of experience and qualifications from primary age right through to full-time employment.

Over the last four years we have developed an education team to the charity. A training provider to schools and young people which is now established as a hugely success provider of apprenticeships across the region.

**How have you adapted since Covid?**

We are extremely proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with our schools, still maintaining high levels of impact. A number of our services have been equally or if not more influential virtual in terms of reach and accessibility to young people. Covid pushed us to broaden our skill set even further in terms of dealing with virtual delivery and how our programmes not only benefitted levels of physical activities but increased the learning and awareness of mindfulness. Particularly through the 5-ways to wellbeing. In October 2020 we launched our Move & Food project. Implemented to support vulnerable children in school half-terms we were able to safely deliver freshly cooked hot meals to families and activity packs to encourage

families to take part in physical activity. This project will now continue and when it is safe to do so, children will attend our half-term clubs to receive their meals and take part in organised, structured play and activities.

**What are your plans for the coming year?**

To aid Covid recovery. Supporting schools and the local community both in term time and half-term. Now more than ever it is vital that children are as active as possible with so many benefits, not least their health and mental wellbeing. Our School Sport and Wellbeing apprenticeship programme to help support children be as active as possible is proving to be in its highest demand by schools to have extra staff working closely with their children throughout the day. Our Specialist coaches will be utilised to lead structured, high quality PE lessons as well as physical activity intervention allowing school staff to work closely with small groups of children needing the helping hand to catch up in their education.



From left: Sam Ruddock, Sophie Allen and Chris Graves