Go where women are

Insight on engaging women and girls in sport and exercise

SPORT ENGLAND

Executive Summary

'Go Where Women Are' is about engaging women in sport and exercise on their terms and in their space whether physically or emotionally. This review explores our current understanding of women, their relevant motivations, barriers and triggers to getting more active, and what this means for sports and exercise activities and initiatives.

Here are the key principles:

1. **Change the offer to suit the women you are targeting - don't expect women to change to fit sport and exercise**

   The current offer doesn't appeal or appear to be relevant for many women who would like to be active. Listen to what your audience care about and tailor the activity, marketing and customer experience to deliver what they want.

2. **Don't just talk about 'sport' – for many women, sport has baggage**

   The word 'sport' and its traditional image can trigger negative associations for many women. Address this by considering how you present the experience women will have.

3. **Differentiate sport and exercise from other interests by promoting (not preaching) the additional benefits – sell what your audience is asking for**

   In addition to health benefits, which many women do already recognise, sport and exercise can provide the opportunity to socialise, develop skills and spend time with the family. Makes sure your activity promotes these benefits that many women prioritise other activities for.

4. **Seeing is believing. Making sport the 'norm' for women relies on local women of all ages, sizes and faiths not only becoming active but celebrating it and encouraging others to join in**

   Relatable women and girls visibly enjoying being active, at their own pace and somewhere local feels more attainable. Take activity into the community and attract new people by becoming part of their everyday sphere rather than waiting for them to join yours.

Executive Summary

key principles (continued):

5. **Use positivity and encouragement to drive action – stimulating action through fear of consequences will have little traction**

   Reassure the women and girls you are targeting that they are in safe and understanding hands. Don't let women beat themselves up about what they do or don't have.

6. **Make it easy for women to act: right time, right place, right welcome, right company, right gear**

   Address both practical and emotional barriers together to ensure that neither outweigh the motivation to be active. A more convenient crèche facility may only attract those who feel confident with the activity or in a sporting environment already.

7. **People make or break the experience – ensure your audience are appropriately supported along the way**

   Invest in the people that shape the experience of sport and exercise the women you are targeting have. Ensure your audience are welcomed, feel cared for and are regularly communicated with - whether they are familiar faces, new or have recently stopped attending.

Of course, one size does not fit all. Women and girls will vary both between themselves - in terms of attitudes and behaviours - and within themselves as they age and pass through different life stages.

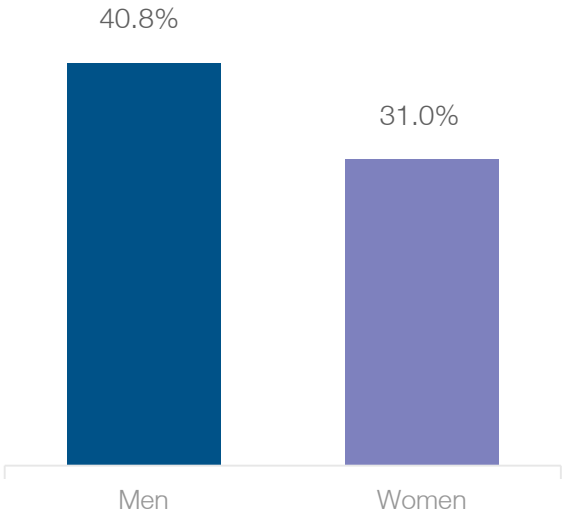
Deliverers of sport and exercise should use the insight from this review and tailor if needed with local research to understand the barriers, motivations and triggers of their target audience.

Contents

1. Context - the need for change
2. Purpose and scope of this review
3. The key principles
4. Understanding your audience
5. How to engage with women and girls
6. Applying the insight – checklist
7. References and sources

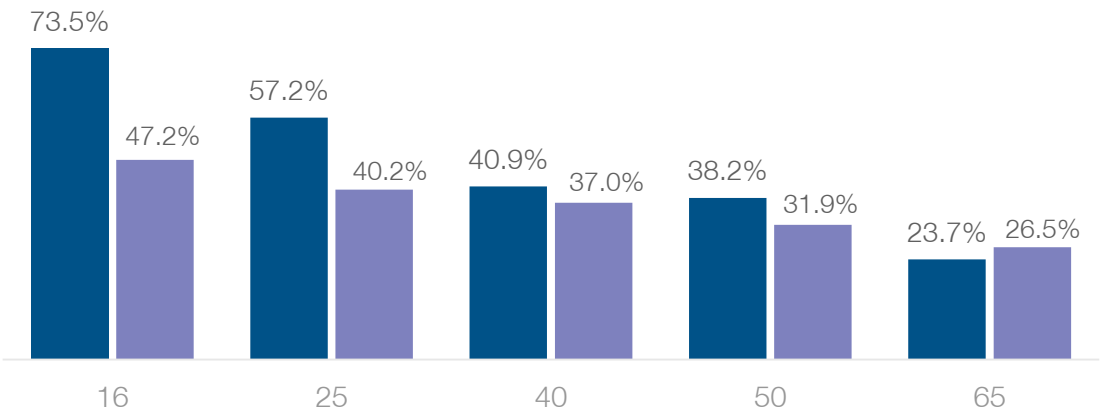
1. Context – the need for change

There are 2 million fewer women than men regularly playing sport



Playing 30 mins of moderate sport at least once a week

More men play more sport than women at almost every age
Although participation is at its highest for women at the youngest age group. This is also where we see the largest gender gap



Age of participant

Source: Adults (16+) sports participation (% and millions) – Active People Survey, results for 12 months to October 2014

and the opportunity to engage them is huge

When asked, **13 million women** say they would like to participate more in sport and physical activity

Just over **6 million** of those women are NOT currently active

Something is stopping them

Source: Women (16+) sports participation (millions) – Active People Survey, results for 12 months to October 2014

2. Purpose and scope of this report

Purpose

- This document offers insight on how to engage women and so help to close the gender gap in sport and exercise*.
- It is a collation of all the best thinking from research projects carried out by Sport England and learning from other partner organisations which have aimed to understand why and how various recent initiatives have been successful (or not). A list of the reports and projects included in the review are provided at the end of the document
- The document is designed to help Sport England's partners, and all those involved in the sector who want to engage women, to understand:
  - **The basics of how women are likely to feel and behave in relation to sport and exercise;**
  - **What will encourage them to get active and keep it up**
- We have chosen to focus right in on women and girls – how they feel, think and what they are telling us about sport and exercise. Once armed with a better understanding of this audience, the next step is to make use of this insight.
- To support you to apply the insight locally, Sport England will be publishing a 'how-to' guide that gives you detailed advice on how you plan and deliver sport more effectively for women and girls.
- The guide has many practical examples from our I Will If You Will women's behaviour change pilot in Bury to help you answer questions such as:
  - What resources are needed at each stage;
  - Where do I find good imagery; and
  - How do I find suitable venues.

Behaviour change is challenging: there is no 'magic bullet', things are constantly changing and we are all still learning. However, applying insight from this review can be an important starting point in getting the right design principles in place to support women and girls to become more active.

*NB. 'Sport and exercise' refers beyond traditional sports to include activity such as fitness classes and dance-based workouts.

Scope

- Understanding how to change the attitudes and behaviours of women in order to engage them with sport is complex. Attitudes and behaviours vary for different target audiences, and are influenced by a rich variety of factors.
- Throughout this report, we have pulled out key learnings which apply at a high level to most women.
- It is the responsibility of the sports and exercise deliverers to ensure that they build on this by understanding the specifics of their target groups. This understanding needs to be in place before the detail of any activity is planned in order to maximise the chances of success.
- However, using this insight as a starting point for considering how to introduce new offers or change existing offers should – in itself – result in better engagement with women.

This review draws on a rich range of data, research and practical projects, conducted over many years. Each of these projects is typically underpinned by quantitative and qualitative data sourced from different groups of women and in some cases where relevant, from men.

For each new delivery initiative, additional local research may be needed to build on this insight base in order to understand the specific needs and preferences of local target audiences.

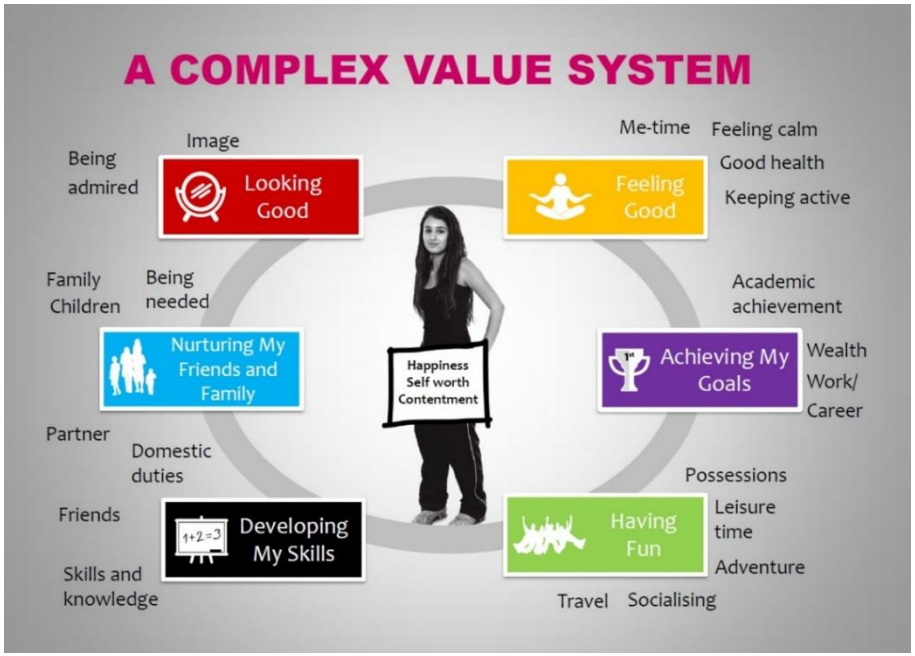
3. The key principles

This section guides you through the most important things to keep in mind when delivering sport and exercise to women and girls

Change the offer to suit women - don't expect women to change to fit sport and exercise

Sport and exercise:

- Is generally not perceived as directly relevant to what goes on in the everyday for women.
- Rarely appeals to women's core values or reflects what is important to them.
- To have wider appeal it needs to align to women's values.



Women in Sport's research has identified six core values which determine how women prioritise and make decisions on how to spend their time day to day. The importance of each will vary for different women, at different times of their lives.

Source: Understanding Women's Lives in 2013 & the role of sport and physical activity (Women in Sport)

Don't just talk about 'sport' – for many women, sport has baggage

- Competitive
- Difficult
- Unfeminine
- Aggressive
- Not aspirational

- Press and social media criticism of the muscular bodies of professional sports women, such as Jessica Ennis and Rebecca Addlington.

- BUT many women and girls do embrace traditional sports and enjoy its competitive element.

*"I think a lot of girls leave school with a very bad feeling about sport. There's always been that attitude of 'you're either a natural or not."**

'Disengaged'**	'Fanatics'**
Alienating	Inspiring
Effort	Motivation
Scary	Exciting
Pressure	Passion
Competition	Teamwork
Failure	Pride

Selling your activity to a wider audience may require a softening of 'sporting' language to counter some of the negative associations

Source: *Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014) ; **Sport England 'Youth Review', focus groups led by 'The Pineapple Lounge' (2014)

Differentiate sport and exercise from other interests by promoting (not preaching) the additional benefits – sell what your audience is asking for

- **To engage women and girls, we need to think about what sport can do for them, specifically in relation to what really matters to them**
  - A healthy way to spend time with the family
  - A good way to catch up with friends or meet new people
  - An energiser before work, education, going out
  - An effective way to de-stress after work, education, looking after the kids
  - An opportunity to develop new skills or discover new places (outdoors)

*"Cycling is something I can enjoy with the kids so I love it – it's a wholesome family activity."**

- **But to truly compete with other interests, facilities and the delivery of activity need to help women manage their time the way they want to**
  - Varied session times
  - Clean and private showers and changing rooms, hair dryers
  - Space to socialise
  - Offers for families

*"The Castle Centre hasn't got hair dryers so I wouldn't go straight to work after."***

Source: *Understanding Women's Lives (2013); **Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014)

Seeing is believing. Making sport the 'norm' for women relies on local women of all ages, sizes and faiths, becoming active, celebrating it and encouraging others to join in

- Take advantage of women's own **networks** and people power: **word of mouth** is consistently the most effective form of marketing.

- Use '**relatable people'** in case studies and communication to make sure that women and girls understand that activities are genuinely for people 'like them'.

- Take the **activity into the community**. Both physically through outdoor sessions or venues in new and unexpected places and visually by celebrating new joiners and reaching new circles of women.

*"We have a buddy system [at a sitting volleyball club for disabled people] and I think that works really well. When a new player comes, one of us will become their buddy and just text them and say 'Are you coming tonight, do you want to meet first and we will go to it together?' And then after the first session we will text and say 'It was great to have you there, can't wait to see you next week'. So you feel part of the club."**

Women in Sport has recently published research on role models and influencers and their impact on women's sporting behaviours. For more information and contacts see references

Source: EFDS Active Together (2014)*

Use positivity and encouragement to drive action – stimulating action through fear of consequences will have little traction

- Inspire confidence in your audience and reassure them that the activity itself will be a positive experience. This may include the atmosphere created by;
  - the women themselves
  - the style of instruction
  - the physical environment (no mirrors? Music?)
- Use intrinsic (feeling/looking better) and extrinsic (social interaction) incentives to encourage women to keep going.

- Offer the right kind of carrot – consider the things women value most.
- Some sports brands present images of lean and toned women, which can alienate those who are less active.
- Celebrate what is being achieved: don't let women beat themselves up about what they do or don't have. Reinforce achievements regularly and with sincerity.

Source: *FCB Inferno This Girl Can Qual Research (2014)

Make it easy for women to act: right time, right place, right welcome, right company, right gear

It's important here to remember both the practical considerations and also the emotional factors that may make it easier for women to engage in sport and exercise.

Practical

- Right time: be open or run classes to suit women's lifestyle (work and family).
- Right place: close to where women are, that feel safe and with adequate facilities (changing rooms, hairdryers, no mirrors in class etc…).
- Right welcome: make sure the welcome is warm, informative and reassuring by reception/class leaders.
- Right company: ideally show them they will be with people like them.
- Right gear: clear, simple and necessary clothing/equipment advice.

Personal/emotional

- Right time: reduce the fear that time exercising is time that should be spent on others.
- Right place: reduce the fear of looking silly, un-attractive or on show in unfamiliar and open environments.
- Right welcome: reduce the fear of being exposed as lacking ability or familiarity with the steps, equipment or way to the changing room.
- Right company: reduce the fear of not fitting in or being able to keep up with the group.
- Right gear: reduce the fear of looking like the odd one out by wearing the wrong thing.

People make or break the experience – ensure your audience are appropriately supported along the way

- Understand who comes into contact with the women you are targeting and when. Whether this is facility staff, instructors or those marketing the activity - plan a **consistently reassuring experience** from start to finish.

- It is not good enough to have a leaflet offering support and empathy, but then contradicted by an activity characterised by competition and delivered in a semi-aggressive way.

- Invest in training for those at the front line (especially coaches, instructors and receptionists) to ensure that the women you are targeting feel confident their needs, and potentially their nervousness, is understood and considered.

- Develop a more personal, frequent style of communicating with the women and girls you attract. Support them by providing them with the advice and tools they require to start, continue or come back to you having lapsed once or a number of times.

- Remember to reward them appropriately and celebrate their achievements to keep them coming back.

4. Understanding your audience

This section explores the importance of understanding why many women perceive that sport and exercise isn't for them. We take a look at women's barriers, motivations and triggers when it comes to sport and exercise.

Barriers - What gets in the way or stops women taking part
Motivations - What attracts women to take part, what will they get out of it
Triggers - What will spur action (be it an offer, event or unexpected life change)

Understanding perceptions

- Most women know that sport and exercise is a good thing to do, but don't feel they can get round to it for a whole raft of reasons.
- There is demand: as highlighted earlier, when asked, 13 million women say they would like to participate more in sport and physical activity.
- In others words, there is some motivation - albeit often framed rather negatively - but there are perceived and real barriers to making it happen.

*"I want to want to go, but I don't want to go..."**

*"It's me that's stopping me from doing it...just making excuses..."**

*"You would always like to do more.."***

I know I should… I would if I could…

Source: *Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014); **FCB Inferno This Girl Can Qual Research (2014)

Fear of being judged

- Fear of being judged is for many an important all-encompassing concern, which then surfaces re-articulated in the form of another more 'acceptable' barrier.
- Whilst a woman may cite lack of time as the reason she doesn't manage to do any exercise, her real concern may be that (in the case of mums in particular) spending time on exercise will be perceived as self-indulgent and implies she is neglecting her domestic and maternal duties.
- Judgement can come from all angles: from immediate friends and family (afraid of not living up to their expectations); from other women (not matching up to their standards) and from men (dismissive of their ability).
- It is a barrier that remains relevant even amongst more sporty women who fear they cannot perform as well as they used to.
- This shows the importance of going beyond initial responses and getting to grips with the core issues that lie at the heart of women's decision making.

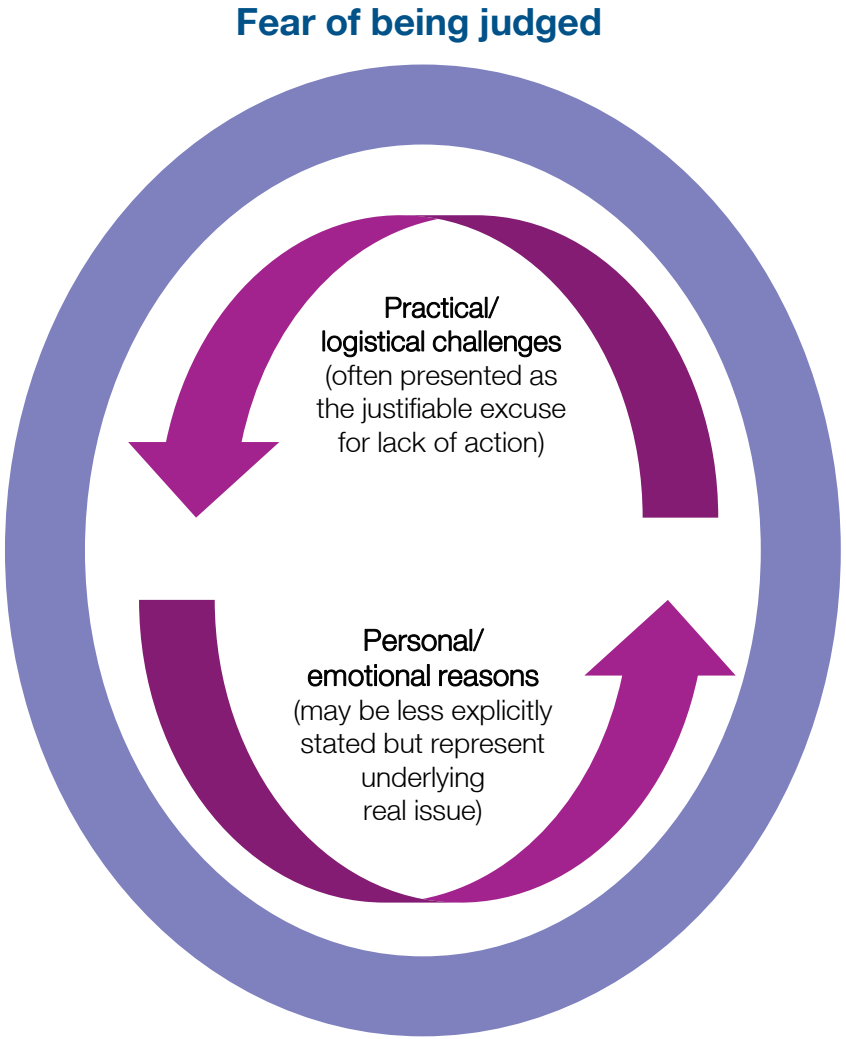
Source: FCB Inferno This Girl Can Qual Research (2014)

Understanding other factors stopping women

- Underpinning 'fear of judgement' (which may not be explicitly expressed as such), women tend to cite a whole variety of barriers which 'get in the way' of their ability to do sport and exercise.

- It is possible to categorise these barriers into two broad types:
  - Practical/logistical challenges
  - Personal/emotional reasons

- Important to note - in reality these are often interlinked and inseparable. **It's therefore crucial we attempt to address both the practical and emotional barriers.**



Practical Barriers

- **Time and cost** are often given as the main reasons preventing women from taking part in sport and exercise. For some, the additional spend from the household budget is a very practical barrier but for others time and cost become a matter of prioritising sport and exercise.
- Women, in particular mothers, feel bad about being away from their family and spending time on themselves.
- It is revealing that (busy) working women are more active.
- Another dimension is the challenge of finding the right activity at the right time.
- Going where women are means understanding their constraints, such as staying for children's bed times, family meal times and accommodating work schedules.
- **Lack of information** is another significant barrier, particularly compounded by lack of time to find the information.

*"It's not that I don't want to do it, it's just very difficult to fit in."**

*"If you're motivated enough, cost won't come into it, because running on the road is free."***

*"I'm going to go back to work part-time and it may end up clashing...."***

*"It can be 9 o'clock by the time we've eaten and got the kids the bed, then she doesn't want to go out."***

According to the British Social Attitudes Survey, 15% of women with kids and 18% of women without agree *"I wouldn't know how to go about taking part in sport."*

Source: *Active Women First Year Evaluation Report (2012); **Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014)

Personal Barriers

- Personal barriers are more tricky and addressing them is harder as they are often not 'out in the open'.
- It's important to strike a balance between talking about these directly whilst avoiding being patronising.
- But if done successfully, addressing these can have more impact than making things more convenient. If the right attitudes are in place, there is greater willingness to do what it takes to make things happen.
- A fundamental personal concern is the fear of being judged as described earlier; further worries layer on top of this, are often linked.
- Many women have worries about appearance, which can be a general unhappiness with having to reveal their body, as well as being put off by what you look like once you do exercise (no make-up, hot, sweaty etc.).
- Social confidence is another barrier. Women often are put off by the idea of having to 'confront' these activities on their own. They may also have worries that they won't fit in – 'it's not for me'.
- Concerns about ability are also an issue, whether just fears or reality (for those with injuries or health conditions). Even women who have been previously very sporty can worry about ability and failure to live up to expectations in terms of performance.

*"All four of us admitted that we were quite intimidated before we actually went to the first session. None of us had played for such a long time and we thought it would be really professional. What my friend did find out was that it was very informal 'back to netball' and you didn't have to be ace at it...this was definitely appealing."**

*"I can't walk far enough, let alone run."**

*"Throwing yourself around in lycra? I would feel embarrassed, I just would. The instructors are all size 6 with not a bead of sweat on them. Then there's me, just flagging."**

Source: *Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014)

Understanding what's motivating

- Motivations are the attitudes and factors that drive an individual to take part.
- The need to do sport and exercise is recognised and understood by many, but often framed negatively.
- There are other more positive forces to encourage and inspire women.
- Delivering on these is what will make sport and exercise appealing and keep women coming back.
- The dynamic of how these positive forces operate changes as women become more active and get 'into' sport.
- Active women often find that exercise brings its own inherent rewards: the motivations that keep women exercising are often different to those which caused them to start.

It's unhealthy not to do sport
I'll be unfit if I don't do any exercise
I'll get fat and flabby if I don't get active

I know it will be a laugh
I'll get something out of this

What does sport need to offer to be appealing?

- In terms of getting a handle on what will positively persuade the target audience to take part, this is where the difference between women becomes more significant.
- Women will be motivated by different factors in line with their characters and preferences, for example some women are after 'something new', some are looking for 'support and friendship' and some focus on performance.
- However, beyond these particular nuances which can be dialled up or down as appropriate, there is a need to bring out the broader positive story, for example:
  - There is fun to be had, or the idea of getting something unique or meaningful will resonate well with younger generations.
  - It is sociable – an opportunity to be with friends and to make friends.
  - Engaging in sport and exercise is worthwhile and offers a sense of achievement.

*"You always feel better after it."**

*"If you've got a goal it does help you to get out of the door."**

*"I like doing my sports in a team. If I'm on my own, I get bored. I just love being part of a gym. That's my social side – seeing all my friends at the gym."**

Source: *Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014)

Catalysing action

- Addressing barriers will help to reduce resistance and ensure that women feel that taking part in sport and exercise is an acceptable and achievable thing to do.
- Building up appeal and stimulating positive motivation will draw women in.
- This is not always sufficient and a trigger is often needed to create momentum and spur the target audience to take action at a specific point in time.
- This will help to move the target audience beyond good intentions into making concrete plans.

*"Manchester 10k was a motivating goal to work towards. You've got people sponsoring you for a charity and it spurs you on."**

*"You can put in as many leaflets as you like, people don't necessarily pick them up. You need to see something, watch something that inspires you."**

Source: *Bury Proposition Testing Research (2014)

Understand your audience

Women and girls move in and out of activity both physically and emotionally over time. Be aware of this, notice the shifts and support women to come back despite changes in life stage and circumstances.

In order to change behaviour sustainably, the strength of motivation must outweigh the barriers. The means:

- Remove the barriers (but this is not sufficient to get action).
- Ensure there is positive motivation.
- Provide a trigger to spur progression from vague intent to planned action at a specific moment in time.

5. How to engage with women and girls

This section highlights the things that we should do, say and ultimately make women feel when addressing barriers to sport, motivations for taking part and using triggers to spur action

- Do: practical and logistical considerations (what needs to happen, be offered, where events & activities should take place etc).
- Say: communications considerations (what needs to be said, how it should be articulated, how events and those involved need to be presented).
- Feel: emotional response (how women will respond, desired outcomes in terms of attitudes & perceptions).

Barriers

Actions to address practical barriers

- Hyper local venues (ideally within walking distance) or close to stops on popular bus routes (particularly important for disabled women likely to be reliant on public transport).
- Venues that are close to other important hubs of activity, e.g. shops and schools.
- Timings that fit with different routines, e.g. before/after work, weekend mornings, later evening after children's bedtimes.
- Affordable childcare made available.
- Family fun sessions or ways to take part with children.
- Taster and drop-in sessions which allow women to take part without concerns of over-committing time or money.
- Consistent hub sessions which allow for more flexible and fluid participation.
- For disabled women, activities need to be accessible making it easier to integrate within mainstream offerings.

Do

The Active Women programme included the Sport4Women group who understood the importance of going to where women are, rather than simply communicating in places associated with sport. The group staged mini badminton and basketball matches in school playgrounds and halls to target mums and encourage them to come along and play as a group. These taster sessions were easily accessible and showed women how fun and friendly exercise could be.*

'Ladies' Days' were organised by East Durham Belles and hosted by the local leisure centre. These worked like 'open days' where women could come and meet other women and coaches, pick up leaflets, have a look at the leisure centre. These days were more successful than other attempts at other venues as it gave women a chance to see what the leisure centre was like in a social setting and get comfortable with the idea of going there.*

Source: *Active Women First Year Evaluation Report (2012)

How to communicate to address practical barriers

- Support people, both volunteers and paid staff, to spread the word within the community and ensure knowledge and understanding about sport and exercise offers is spread beyond existing users of facilities.
- Provide detailed information, not just the basics on timings and venues, but also what sort of clothing is required, changing facilities available, childcare etc.
- Ensure consistent and up-to-date information is available across all channels (dedicated website, social media presence, all partner organisations).
- Talk to men about supporting women in practical ways (domestic chores e.g. childcare and cooking) to free up women's time as well as offering emotional support and positive encouragement.
- Reframe activities as quality time to spend with friends / family.
- Use real life stories in communications which help to give women 'permission' to use time and money in this way.

Say

In the Bury pilot IWIYW, two community roles were created. Community Activators were recruited in paid posts to reach out to women and girls and to facilitate the development of tailored activities, partnerships and access to venues and facilities. Community Champions were volunteers who helped to spread the word amongst their networks.*

Within the Bury pilot, numerous activities included sessions which were specifically designed for families. As part of the Tennis Open Day, not only were there Cardio Tennis and Xpress Tennis sessions, but also one called Family Time.*

Source: *IWIYW Evaluation Report (2014)

Desired emotional response after practical barriers have been addressed

Feel

- Women should feel confident it will be easy to take part and get active.
- They should feel they have got all the information they need about activities.
- This will mean they know exactly what they need to do to prepare for their activities.
- And they will feel confident that it will be easy and stress-free to prepare themselves for 'getting on with things' afterwards, whether this is picking up the children or doing their hair properly so they can head off straight to work.
- They will not feel guilty about spending time or money on themselves.
- They will understand that engaging with sport and exercise can be prioritised within their busy lives without it making life difficult for others around them.

Kelly

Kelly vs "Mummy!"

Age: 31
Home: Bury
Occupation: Taking care of her three little ones
Activity: Living room exercise classes
"The kids enjoy exercising with me. When I put on my work out video or put the music on, they just instinctively join in."

How much does it cost?
What equipment do I need?
What level of ability do I need?
What will the atmosphere be like?

Actions for getting past hang-ups

- Face to face recruitment allows women to get immediate reassurance, both from meeting a friendly face and being able to ask questions.
- Women-only sessions are particularly important to some communities and need to be delivered appropriately. For example, male staff cannot walk into sessions to repair equipment.
- Offer sessions tailored to different ability levels, especially for beginners, those lacking confidence, as well as for the more advanced.
- Age-targeted activities (at both ends of spectrum) can appeal to younger and older generations.
- Re-thinking sport and exercise to incorporate a social element.
- Bring a friend (or carer) discounts encourage women to overcome a fear of going alone.

Do

Many successful projects have incorporated a social element and relaxed the way an activity traditionally takes place in order to make it simpler and more accessible. This was the case for the 'Get a Rounder In' initiative in Somerset (as part of Sportivate), whilst some Back to Netball sessions in the Active Women programme were tailored to Asian participants. There was less focus on rules and skills and more on fun to take account of the language barrier.*

In the Bury pilot IWIYW, the setup of the mobile pool was critical to ensure its success with all target audiences. Features included a private, female-only marquee to house the pool, no viewing gallery or windows for increased privacy, increased privacy upon entrance to the marquee and an enclosed pool area, only visible when poolside.*

Source: *IWIYW Evaluation Report (2014)

How to communicate reassurance

- Recruit high quality, friendly instructors, who have been trained in softer skills and understand the importance of boosting women's confidence.
- Address fears head-on before the session itself: reassure that activities will be safe and women will be supported.
  - This will be particularly important for disabled women who may need encouragement which is clear but still subtle in it's delivery.
- Myth-busting communications: make it clear that you don't have to be super fit and that others will be beginners as well.
- Show sweating women in sports clothing comfortable and happy in themselves.
- Use real life case studies that show normal women to whom others will easily relate.
- Show women they are a good role for their daughters and others around them.
- For those that relish a challenge, setting goals and encouraging progress towards them will be important.

Say

The recent 'This Girl Can' (TGC) campaign has these issues at its core. As a clear and deliberate alternative to the way in which other sports organisations present 'perfect women', TGC uses real women who tell the story of their personal experiences. The campaign shows women whilst they are exercising with no attempts to hide what this means they will look like. Instead, their hot and sweaty appearance is celebrated.

The TGC brand guidelines describes the tone of voice that aligns with these objectives.

'We're not here to tell women that how they feel about exercise is wrong, the way they're doing it is incorrect, or to guilt-trip them into taking up a sport. We are on a level with our audience, not a brand pedestal. We're here to support, encourage and enthuse women, rather than enlighten them. And we're doing it in a fun, accessible and sassy way.'*

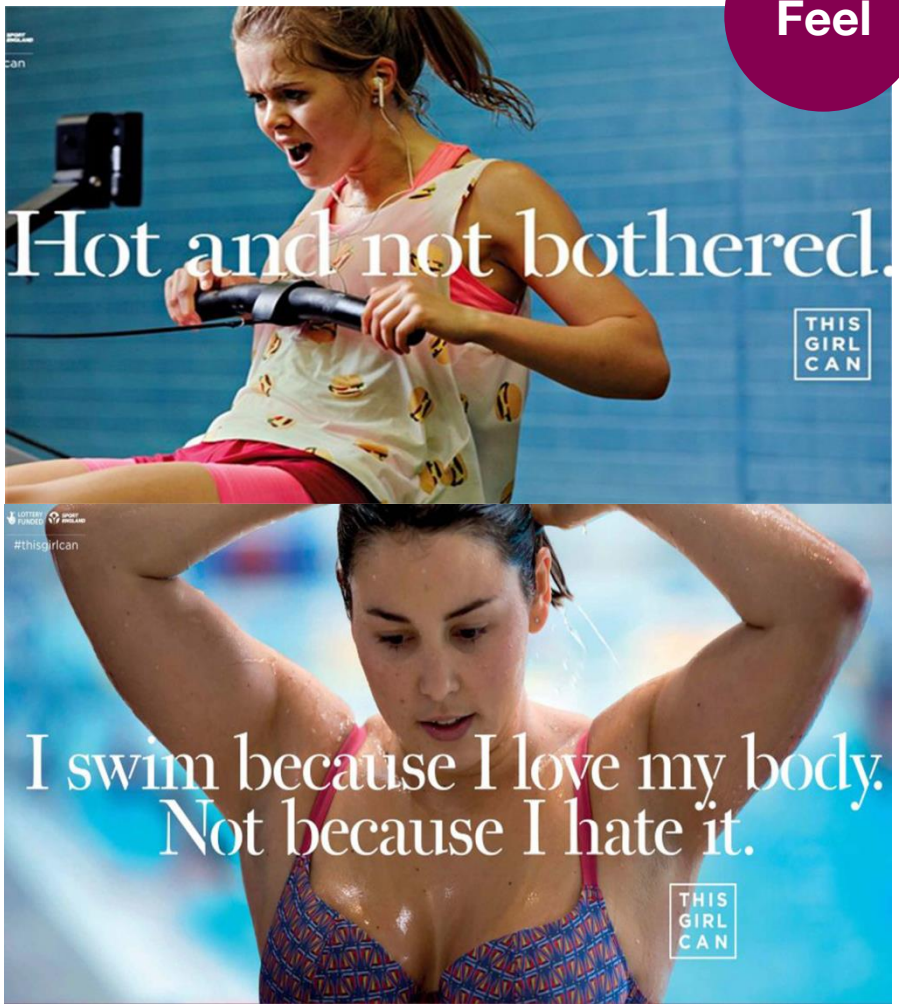
Source: *This Girl Can brand guidelines

Desired emotional response after emotional barriers have been addressed

- The target audience should feel comfortable about all that's involved with getting active.
- They should no longer have concerns that the activity will be an unwelcome or unpleasant challenge.
- They will be confident that the overall experience, whether the venues, the people or the activities, will be non-threatening.
- They won't be worried about being humiliated or feeling silly.
- They will feel empowered and excited about their intentions.
- They will be proud of what they are undertaking and inspired to tell and encourage others.

*"If they can do it, I can too!"**

Feel



Source: *FCB Inferno This Girl Can Qual Research (2014)

Barriers

Summary

- Fear of being judged is an all-encompassing concern which surfaces for many re-articulated as a more 'acceptable' constraint.
- Practical barriers of time, cost and information often cited by women can be addressed via hyper local activities, conveniently timed sessions and targeted information.
- Women should feel guilt-free and confident it will be easy to take part and get active.
- Personal barriers like lack of confidence are more intractable and addressing them can be harder as they are often not 'out in the open'.
- Recruiting via personal contacts, incorporating social elements in activities, using real life case studies and offering women only sessions can all help to reassure.
- Women should feel comfortable and welcome, excited and empowered about taking part and inspired to encourage others.

Motivators

Practical suggestions to deliver appeal

- Offer a variety of activities to ensure wide appeal, and within these ensure there are new and different types of activity included (particularly important for younger women).
- Offer 'bankers' (activities whose popularity is well established, e.g. fitness and dance-based classes such as Zumba).
- Bring a friend discount (or equivalent) to highlight the social benefits.
- Offer loyalty card/programme to incentivise repeat participation.
- Provide the opportunity for participants to be trained up for a special role which makes them feel they are part of the activity.
- Make it shareable (for example encourage posting of achievements and successes on social media).
- Be flexible (ready to scale up as momentum slowly builds up).

Do

The BloominGirls event showed how sports and physical activity can be delivered in a new and exciting format. The event was carefully designed to cater to the interests of its target audience of teenage girls. It took the form of a sports festival with partnerships from fashion and beauty brands. The activities were based on innovative ways of engaging with four chosen sports (football, netball, rugby and hockey) which showed how being active can be fun and sociable.*

The 'Up & Under Sports' project targeted sixth form pupils from the three secondary schools in Chippenham to play touch rugby.
The project trialled offering Friday evening sessions, which were promoted 'Fitness for the Weekend'. By organising the activity as an opportunity for fun and exercise at the end of the week, rather than a serious game, the sessions proved to be a popular alternative to going to the pub on a Friday night.**

Source: *BloominGirls Evaluation Report; **Women's Participation Insight Pack - Golden Rules

How to generate enthusiasm through communication

- Don't pigeon-hole what the target audience might be interested in (especially girls).
- Provide the personal touch in communications (e.g. text message reminders about forthcoming sessions, messages to offer encouragement after missed sessions).
- Supportive and encouraging coaches who understand how to ensure different women/girls get the most out of an activity, whether this is simply about being there, or else offering reassurance about continuing to make progress.
- Talk about self-improvement, not about being the best or better than others.
- Provide reminders about how the mind and body benefit but don't preach.
- Use words that resonate with the target audience, e.g. freedom, fun, exploration.
- Ask for feedback and input in decision-making (including coaches as they will have insight from front line).

Say

The Us Girls Rocks project is careful in the language it uses to convey its objectives and what participants will get out of it. It aims to appeal to the values and aspirations of the target audience and puts these forward as the priorities. These include building self-esteem, feeling good, friendships and 'sister solidarity', having fun, creativity, gaining new skills and developing an understanding of self, as well as improving physical, mental and emotional well-being .*

The Bury pilot IWIYW gave thought to the tone of voice to be used in communications. There was a deliberate decision to avoid the more directive and possibly 'preachy' language often found in government campaigns. Instead, the preference was for a friendly and informal voice and with different phrasing to appeal to the diverse motivations women might have, whether this was a desire for something new, or for a fun time.**

Source: *Women's Participation Insight Pack - Golden Rules; **IWIYW Evaluation Report (2014)

Desired emotional response once appeal has been established

- Anticipation about feeling good in mind and body.
- Expectations about getting energised.
- Hope to be de-stressed.
- Will enjoy time with friends, new and known.
- Hope to make progress.
- Ready to keep going and push self.
- Get something out of it.
- Feel part of it/have ownership.
- Empowered.
- Celebrated and rewarded.

Feel

Motivators

Summary

- The need to exercise is understood by many, but often framed negatively.
- There are other more positive forces which can be leveraged to encourage women.
- These differ for different types of women but can be about having fun, achievement or realising social benefits.
- Delivering on these is what will make sport and exercise appealing and keep women coming back.
- Offering a variety of activities will ensure wide appeal.
- Incorporating social benefits and opportunities for women to get more involved will motivate many.
- Supportive coaches and using personal channels in communications wherever possible will help with retention.
- Participation should make women feel good in mind and body; celebrated and rewarded.

Triggers

What can spark action?

- Triggers can operate at different levels: small scale offers, personal invitations or opportunities to tempt in individuals, as well as larger scale events to build up a community of change.
- Even just coming across the right information might be enough for those who wouldn't normally find themselves looking out for sport and exercise opportunities.
- Consider promoting activities in non-sports associated venues e.g. local supermarkets.
- Specific (time-limited) incentives or rewards, such as vouchers, deals, freebies can create a sense of urgency and anticipation.
- Talking about specific cause-related challenges, which strike a chord as they are concrete and achievable, may help to make women think this is something they could actually go for.
- Encouraging public pledges can stimulate a domino effect amongst a target audience.

Do

In the Bury pilot IWIYW, various initiatives were developed in order to drum up interest in the activities on offer. One was a specific challenge: for women to get active for 30 minutes a week for at least ten weeks. Women were invited to make these pledges public via social media.*

Say

Campaigns that ensure they are timely can be successful. One way to do this is to work up around national events or holidays to create the feeling that 'everyone' is getting involved. A recent social media campaign on New Years' Resolutions by Back to Netball resulted in a huge increase in participants.**

Source: *IWIYW Evaluation Report (2014); **Active Women First Year Evaluation Report (2012)

Desired emotional response when confronted with triggers

Feel

- Galvanised into action.
- Committed to following through.
- Excited about what is coming next.

Triggers

Summary

- Whilst addressing barriers and motivations is important, a trigger is often needed to create the spur to take action at a specific point in time
- These can operate at different levels including small scale offers/incentives, personal invitations or larger scale events to build up a community of change
- Information in the right place, the right form at the right time can also be powerful on its own

6. Applying the insight - checklist

Start where women are – being real and friendly will engage women

- ❑ Use their language: friendly and informal
- ❑ Use pictures and images of real women
- ❑ Show an understanding of real issues (looking sweaty, pressures of time)

Show women what sport can do for them personally – they want to feel confident doing sport

- ❑ Use real role models showing women confident being themselves (hot and not bothered)

Show women that sport is a good use of their time socially – they want to have fun with their friends and kids

- ❑ Communicate that this is a good use of their time – having some fun time with the girls (or with their kids)

Design the offer to make it easy for women to do sport – don't expect women to change to fit sport

- ❑ Right time: be open or run classes to suit women's lifestyle (work and family)
- ❑ Right place: close to where women are, with the right facilities (changing rooms, hairdryers etc…)
- ❑ Right welcome: make sure the welcome is warm by reception/class leaders
- ❑ Right company: ideally they should be with people like them
- ❑ Right gear: reduce the fear of the wrong gear

Focus on repeat participation – ensure you design the offer to keep women engaged, not just to attend once

- ❑ Once engaged, keep in touch with them
- ❑ Encourage communities of interest: women spending time with their kids, with the girls (meeting up after for food or drink), or women seeking to achieve more
- ❑ Make your communications personal
- ❑ Appeal to all the senses (music etc…)

7. References and sources

What's next and where to go: List of sources and references

- Hopefully by now you understand the principles of Go Where Women Are and how to use the insight as the starting point in designing and delivering initiatives to engage women and girls.
- You may be left with some outstanding questions or want to know more about a specific subject. Fear not! More help is available.
- Listed below are the sources referred to for this review. Many of these can be consulted for more information:

  - I Will If You Will Pilot Phase One Evaluation in Bury (2014)
  - Bury Proposition Testing Research (2013)
  - Evaluation of BloominGirls pilot (2014)
  - Youth Insights Pack (2014)
  - Active Women Evaluation
  - This Girl Can women's marketing campaign and brand guidelines
  - FCB Inferno This Girl Can Qualitative Research (2014)
  - Understanding Women's Lives in 2013 & the Role of Sport and Physical Activity (Women in Sport, 2013) (with thanks to Women in Sport)
  - Women's Participation Insight Pack - Golden Rules (Sport England, 2013)
  - Active Together (English Federation of Disability Sport, 2014)
  - Active People Survey

Further information can be found via Sport England

Email:
research@sportengland.org
Web Address:
http://www.sportengland.org/research/

And via Women in Sport

https://www.womeninsport.org/resources/

Thank you

For more details contact
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