How to...
‘ensure sport and physical activity sessions for young women are provided in the right place’

Why it’s important

One of the factors that is most likely to encourage young females to take part in regular sport and physical activity is ease of access. By providing sports and activities close to people’s homes, in areas that are known and familiar to them, the likelihood that they will engage is increased.

Young females who have limited or no previous sporting experience are also unlikely to visit traditional sport settings/venues. Therefore, providing activity in non-traditional sports facilities (indoor or outdoor) in the local community is likely to be more attractive to them.

The ‘right place’ will vary for everyone but there are common themes that should be considered when planning where to run activities.

Factors to consider

Provide local opportunities and consider the type of facility used

Place the emphasis on using local provision for activity sessions to negate any reliance on travel. This could be indoor or outdoor. Territorial issues and busy or unlit roads are potential barriers that need to be considered when planning where to put on activity.

Try where possible to provide activities at a convenient location, near to where your target group live, study or work. By providing activity in an environment which is both local and familiar to them they are much more likely to engage. For students this may be on the college site, for working women it may be in the workplace, for young mums at a children’s centre, nursery or primary school. For BME and faith groups, holding activity sessions at their place of worship is a good idea.

Determine whether running an activity in a local community facility or a more traditional sports facility is most appropriate for your target group – the most popular types of facility used for Us Girls sessions are indoor spaces (eg school/college gym, dance studio, community halls, local authority indoor sports centres and community indoor sports centres).

Where activities cannot be provided locally it is important to factor in transport links and accessibility.

The environment and the customer experience

Consider whether the environment is inviting and safe for young women to participate in, whether the young women are able to exercise in comfort and at ease. When thinking about the social atmosphere, consider whether the play and social areas will make the young women feel comfortable.

Women from BME groups often need to exercise in a female only environment. This means an area with no male access or viewing, where windows and doors are closed off to the general public, participants and staff are all female and there is no filming or photography (mobile phones).

WSFF research shows the following factors are important for women when considering leisure facilities and should be considered when choosing the most appropriate place to run an activity:

- Facilities must be clean and odour free.
- Facilities that are bland with blank walls and little natural light are not attractive to women.
- Separate male and female changing areas are preferred.
- Women like having areas in which they can socialise before and after activity.

It is however acknowledged that in some cases these are factors that cannot be controlled.

Having clear, obvious signage in the centre so that women know exactly where to go when they enter the centre and ensuring that staff are welcoming and are informed of the session that is taking place so they can answer any questions are key to ensuring a positive participant experience.
Case studies

Us Girls Brent
Consultation identified that their target group tend to be enrolled on full or part-time courses at college. Therefore most of the activities are being offered on site at the College of North-West London (CNWL) to allow for direct access to a large number of these young women. Some of the sessions however are not run on site, and they’ve found that this has had a really negative impact on attendance as the girls are not willing to travel. The sports coordinator at CNWL said: ‘Ideally all sessions would be run on site. We’ve put badminton court markings in our dance studio so we can now run badminton sessions here too.’

Us Girls Redbridge and Newham, London
To further promote their sessions, Us Girls Redbridge are working with their neighbouring borough Newham to produce a leaflet that shows all of the Us Girls sessions that are taking place along the number 25 bus route. This is a very popular bus route for residents of both boroughs as it travels from Ilford in Redbridge to Stratford in Newham and then on to central London. They are hoping the new information will encourage new participants to attend the sessions as it will show how easily accessible the activities are by bus.

Us Girls Chorley
One of the reasons why their mums and tots trampoline session is so successful is because the women are able to meet at the children’s centre (a place that is familiar to them) and walk over to the leisure centre with their friends into an environment which they wouldn’t normal go to.

Route 25 - your US GIRLS journey to fitness

Benefits of being an Us Girls Member
- Receive regular information about Us Girls activities
- Subsidised access to Us Girls activities
- Women United & Girls United FC coaching
- Monthly discounts on the Women’s Basketball (NASSA) - Rokeby School
- Monthly discounts on the Women’s Basketball (Youngblood) - Forest Gate
- Female only gym session
- Female only box-fit classes
- Annual Family Membership - £10 (Newham) / £20 (Redbridge & Newham)
- Mummy buggy fitness
- Body blast
- 20% off all Us Girls activities

For the latest up to date information visit
www.redbridge.gov.uk/usgirls or follow us on Twitter @usgirlsred
Young women are far more likely to take part in some form of physical activity if sessions are held at a facility that is local to them and that they are familiar with.

Take activities into local community facilities rather than expecting participants to travel to specialist sports facilities which may be some considerable distance away.

Remove the barrier of travel by providing activities at a convenient location, near to where your target group live, study or work.

Consider natural barriers such as roads, railways and local territorial issues when planning where to hold your activity.

Make sure the surrounding environment is inviting and safe for women to exercise and socialise in and consider the need for female exclusive environments in some cases.

A positive customer experience is very important in making sure women come back again.

Consider safety and accessibility to the site – eg are walking routes to and from the venue well lit?

Further information

www.usgirls.org.uk

/UsGirlsGetActive

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