

Barriers to Participation – Women and Girls

Key Facts

- 40% of young women have dropped out of physical activity by the age of 18
- Less than one in ten women in Brentwood has taken part in an organised competitive sport in the last year while nearly one in four men have
- Girls as young as seven begin to show negative attitudes towards sport

Main Barriers

- Activity Stereotyping – sports such as rugby may be viewed as ‘male’ and not suitable for women
- Body Consciousness – research shows that about a third of girls don't like others to see how they look when taking part in sport and physical activity
- Lack of Role Models and Media Representation - On average only 5% of sports coverage in national and local print media is dedicated to women's sport
- Homophobia
- Lack of Childcare
- Lack of Money - women working full time earn on average £559 less per month than men do
- Personal Safety / Sexual Harassment

How can these barriers be addressed?

- Use venues with crèche facilities
- Consider women only sessions or clubs
- Use images of women in publicity which show women of all ages and body shapes
- Advertise sessions as fun, sociable and great new experiences rather than emphasising competitiveness
- Establish 'travel groups' for women and girls to travel together and/or share lifts.

Case Study

Mothers and Daughters Outdoor Activity Courses – Cumbria

The scheme was targeted at mothers and daughters of all ages to encourage them to participate in outdoor activities offering women the opportunity to participate in a wide range of outdoor activities in a supportive environment. The course is always over subscribed and booked up well in advance often with returners. Once set up the scheme has been promoted by word of mouth. Often women will turn up determined they will not be going “on the water” and by the



end of it its hard to get them off! The confidence of the women involved has improved dramatically and they have been able to develop their skills in outdoor activities; some women have since trained as instructors themselves.

Sources and Further Information

Active People Survey - <http://www.webreport.se/apd/login.aspx>
Sport England Promoting Sport Toolkit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport
Sport England 'Understanding participation in sport: What determines sports participation among 15-19 year old women?' -
http://www.sportengland.org/15-19_yr_old_exec_summary_final_pdf.pdf
Sports Equality East 'Promoting Equality in Sport and Physical Activity' -
<http://www.sportengland.org/equality-proofing-a4-v1b.pdf>
What Works for Women - <http://www.whatworksforwomen.org.uk>
Women's Sports Foundation - <http://www.wsf.org.uk/>