



Considerations for increasing participation in women and girls football (aged 12+)

Below are a few suggestions you may want to consider when setting up or delivering a football session to girls and women. The list has been compiled by national and regional FA staff with input from Women in Sport and StreetGames Us Girls! It has new participants in mind, or for those with beginner/intermediate skill levels. It is a working document, so imagery and content will be updated as our research and insight develops. The lead officer for Women and Girls Football Development at your local County FA may be able to assist you with some aspects. A list of contacts is available [here](#).

A list of playing, coaching, refereeing and voluntary opportunities for females is available [here](#).

Advertising the session

- Advertise in places where girls go i.e. coffee shops or on the back of toilet doors
- Use images that are similar to the target group you're trying to attract. Some examples are below for your use
- Use female friendly branding and colouring on your marketing materials. See the Women in Sport [Marketing Toolkit](#) as an additional resource. It provides top tips on marketing sport and physical activity to women and girls
- Based on the idea that some women like to exercise together, consider targeting existing groups of women i.e. gym classes/mother and daughter groups
- Set up twitter/facebook accounts and regularly update them and post photos. You could delegate this to the group. Please adhere to FA Safeguarding Guidelines, listed [here](#)
- Encourage 'bring a friend' sessions
- Start a membership scheme with girls getting stamps for each attendance. Offer a prize/free session after 4/6 weeks
- Incentivise attendance i.e. giveaways after 1/3/6 weeks
- Link in with a gym – can you use their studio space?
- Partner with a local professional club for promotional support – through their match day programmes and community schemes
- Link with local schools/colleges/universities to promote sessions
- Informal methods such as word of mouth are the most successful forms of recruitment and promotion for players.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.



Imagery suggestions



Equipment suggestions

- Allow girls to wear casual clothing
- Use colourful bibs – make sure that they're clean and smell nice!
- Try [futsal](#) for beginners
- Some beginners are put off by large heavy footballs and the prospect of being hit by one. Have a variety of different balls in your bag and let the girls choose which one to use
- Provide sweat towels for players during session

Slogan suggestions

Social

- Anyone can take part
- It's all about having fun
- The group are really friendly
- Absolutely bring your mates...
- Get together with the girls
- Who needs facebook friends...
- Love what ya do, do what ya love
- Keep calm and play football
- We play football – come and join us!
- I play football, and you?

Health & Fitness

- You won't even notice you're getting fit!
- It's a great workout!
- Get in shape with a mate

Female only

- Just for girls
- This one is just for the girls!
- Football 4 girls
- Girls on the ball
- Here come the girls

Setting Goals

- Let us know your goals or we can help you set some

Flexible

- We'll tailor it to you



Hackney Laces Girls FC have a great slogan 'This is what football looks like'. Their website is [here](#).

You could also use hashtags to encourage participants to engage with the sessions. Here are some suggestions;

#WeCanPlay

#ThisGirlCan

#girlsfc

#iheartfootball

#footyselfie

Soccercise



Soccercise is an instructor led aerobic exercise or circuit class, typically lasting 45 – 60 mins in length. It can be delivered indoors or outdoors and combines a variety of fitness exercises with a football. The class should be delivered to music and is based on repetitions of specific exercises (i.e. toe taps, squats, sit-ups). Participants can create their own workout to do at home or take part in exercises as part of a class.

The inclusion of footballs in this class adds co-ordination and core stability to familiar exercises. It also builds familiarity and confidence of working with a football. Exercises contain progressions and simplifiers to allow participation for a mix of abilities and fitness levels.

Soccercise can help introduce you to the game, re-familiarise people that used to play, act as pre-season fitness or as part of a warm-up for a football training session. Soccercise can be used within existing FA programmes such as Football Mash Up, Team Sixteen and Mars Just Play. Download the Soccercise video and poster from www.TheFA.com/Soccercise



Session content

“Change the offer to suit the women you are targeting - don’t expect women to change to fit sport and exercise” (Sport England, 2015)

- Constantly consult and ask participants what they want to do
- Play music alongside participation. You could allow the group to choose their own playlist (as long as it’s suitable!)
- Run conditioned games i.e. matches that allow girls to use their hands and feet or where they must score with a part of their body other than their feet
- Have some element of skill development but not for the majority of the session
- Offer the chance to have a go at additional sports by linking with other National Governing Bodies. See poster below
- Play indoors through the winter, outdoors in the summer
- Some women/girls are deterred from playing when being watched by men. Consider a venue with limited viewing access
- Use an approachable, qualified, friendly and understanding coach
- Incorporate set social times into your session i.e. time to discuss the programme or a tea & coffee break
- Allow girls the time to check their phones within a session or incorporate a twitter break so participants can tweet about the session
- Provide appropriate session plans for teachers who can continue and sustain delivery
- Most of the time, girls only want to participate with other girls. Players with more ability may be willing to play mixed football
- The name of the group has been shown to be very important to help the girls feel a sense of belonging. You could run a competition to allow girls to choose their own name/logo/twitter username etc
- To add ownership to your session, players can organise or design their own content. You could incorporate 10/20 minutes of free play at the end of each week, with their own choice of music or work with them to organise a match against other local groups
- When working with a group for a period of time it may be useful to hold a ‘gym induction’ themed session for participants to suggest any improvements/changes to the session content
- Invite a role model to attend the session to speak to the participants about their involvement in the sport. This could be a referee, coach, volunteer or a player. There are lots of ways to get involved in football, so be creative
- Take the group to watch a high profile women’s football match i.e. England/FA WSL/Cup Finals
- See if the County FA can offer other opportunities to playing, such as coaching, marketing, young leadership, volunteering, refereeing.
- Creating the right environment is key to player retention. Players want a friendly setting and good welcome. Lesser factors for retention include flexibility and learning new skills.
- Fun is the most important reason why people get involved in recreational football. However there are subtle differences depending on previous playing experience. Ex-players will also see it as a chance to get fit and existing players will see it as a chance to improve skills.



Incentive suggestions



- iTunes or cinema vouchers
- Discount clothes vouchers
- Memory sticks
- Skill balls
- Pedometers
- Pocket mirrors
- Clothing i.e. training t-shirts

Multi-sport approach

Include a second sport into your session i.e. netball/cricket/hockey/zumba

MyName




NeTBALL or FOOTBALL eiTHER WAY YOU WIN!

Netball and football are the top female sports. Why not give it a go? You can get good, have fun and hang out with your mates. Now you can even try both within an hour. Come along after school and give it a go. It's great that now you have more chances to play and have fun, which is totally brilliant.

Home Games!

Maisie ✱

Jessi ✱✱






Motivators

Findings based on a Just Play survey conducted by sports coach UK;

- For those who have never played before fun is by far the most important aspect.
- For ex-players getting back into the game the need to get fit is a more important motivation. The lack of weekly commitment is also important for this group.
- For those who also play organised football *learning at their own level* is important – more so than for other groups. For a small proportion of this group getting fit is also a reason to play recreational football. Importantly this group still place an emphasis on fun above average for the whole sample.
- Most importantly for players is the environment. A friendly setting and good welcome were significantly more important than any other reasons.
- Flexibility is the second key reason with half of respondents stating this is what keeps them coming back.

The biggest barrier to participation was injury. Nearly a half of respondents stated that injury had prevented them from playing at some time. The other main reasons were weather, lack of people and lack of time.

For more information of 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 see Sport England's 'Go Where Women Are' document [here](#).