

The player pathway for women and girls

Women and girls take up sport at many different ages and life stages. Governing bodies need to ensure that women of all ages are encouraged and supported to progress and reach their potential. After they have reached their peak, sports should ensure that they are not lost to the sport.

Women's motivations when it comes to sport are varied, and it is essential that this is reflected in NGB's player pathways. To maximise the recruitment, retention and development of women and girls, the pathway for sports needs to demonstrate opportunities for those who dream of international success and for those who simply want to have fun. Sports may even require two or three parallel pathways, for performance, participation within a club environment and general participation and a shift away from the traditional pyramid based player pathway that the sports sector is more familiar with.

The following information may assist you in developing the player pathway for women in your sport. The info provides a brief overview of the potential challenges that women and girls face at different life stages. You may also wish to consider the Long Term Athlete Development model into the development of your women and girls player pathway and also to think where coaching and volunteering pathways may dovetail into this.

Overleaf, there is an example of what the women and girls player pathway might look like if it is to reflect participation preferences. This guidance is based on "late specialisation sports" (e.g athletics and team sports), however it is easily adaptable to fit early specialisation sports. The diagram is supported with key recommendations to grow and sustain participation and to ensure as many women as possible are able to reach their potential in their chosen sport.

4 – 8 years old

The focus should be on teaching the fundamental skills of movement, with the emphasis very much on the "fun". At this age, mixed sessions may be beneficial and activities do not have to be specific to an individual sport. Variety and encouragement during sports sessions/ lessons will be vital to sustaining interest in the given activity.

8 – 11 years old

Girls should still be encouraged to try different activities. It is also important to promote to this age group that sport is a cool activity and not unfeminine. Those delivering to this age group should also be careful not to use sport as a way of re-enforcing gender stereotypes. Access to multi skills/ sports clubs should be available and NGBs may wish to work together to provide this type of environment. Activity should start to become more organised and structured with this age group.

11 – 16 years old

This is a time of important physical and emotional changes and growth for girls. They may experience pressures around school-work, social life "fitting in", body image, sexuality and sexual activity, being independent, family life and society's expectations. It is essential that those planning and delivering activity to this age group are aware of these issues and that when developing this aspect of the player pathway this is taken into account. (See fact sheet on teenage girls and drop – out).

16 – 21 years old

For most young adult women, this is a transitional period from education to work which brings new experiences and challenges. It is a time when people move away from the organised sporting structures provided at school and many drop out. Many young adult women have some disposable income, limited caring or other responsibilities, an active social life and an interest in appearance and "looking good". All or some of which might provide the motivation to take part in physical activity and an opportunity for sports to attract female participants if they market their activities appropriately.

Variety and encouragement during sports sessions will be vital to sustaining interest in the given activity.



21 – 35 years old

At this age women may be living with a partner, thinking about saving money to start a family and or buy a home, giving a lot of time to their career – and some do this as well as raising a child or two. Consequently, it may be difficult for those women who are not elite performers to justify the time to participate in sport. In order to retain women in sport participation must be able to be flexible. For instance women may still wish to participate but can't commit to club membership. Player pathways need to provide for this casual participation.

35 +

Whilst many women may have child care responsibilities at this age, as their children grow up they may have more time to participate in sport themselves. They may also be encouraged to participate alongside their children in activities. For this age group, it is important to remember that activities may be new to the participant or they may be returning to activities they have not done for some time, so opportunities to learn or relearn activities at different life stages will be an important component of your player pathway.

Supporting Information/ Recommendations.

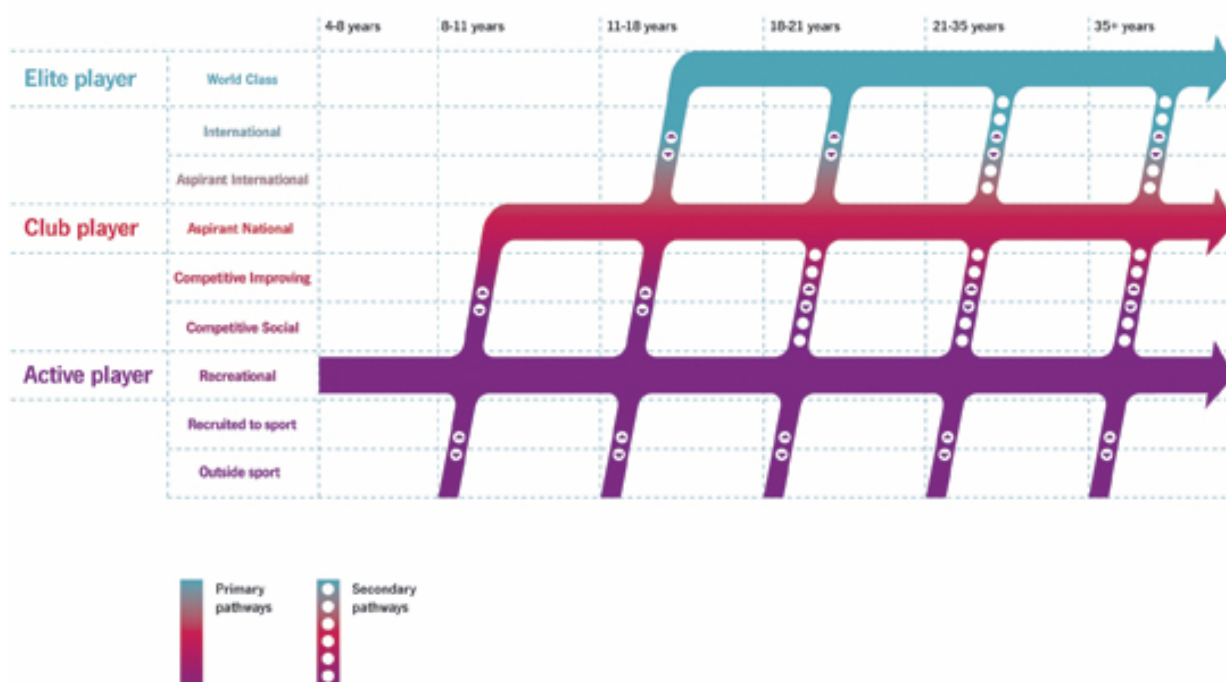
We have identified that women and girls participate in sport for a variety of reasons and have different aspirations. So for those where success at the highest level is the ultimate goal, you should ensure that the pathway is well supported in the following ways:

- Female Centred Coaching,
- Female role models/ mentors,
- Programmes established to "build confidence" of players,
- Pathways provide equal opportunities/profile/ investment to their male counterparts,
- Appropriate exit routes from performance pathway for those with elite aspirations that they do not fulfil.
- For those who simply wish to enjoy their chosen activity, make sure that the pathway does not focus only on competition. And that it does allow for participation to be flexible and enjoyed in a social and non- threatening environment.

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An example of what the player pathway might look like is given below:

The Player Pathway



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