



Top Tips: Engaging more females in **Sportivate**

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1

The current Sportivate landscape for girls

Nationally, Sportivate has had a positive impact on community sport due to the variety and volume of activities taking place. However, when it comes to female participation there has been an insignificant increase in the number of females attracted to the programme with only **41%** of the participants being female compared to **58%** male. The good news is that those females who are engaged effectively are being retained throughout. The following resource will give you ideas and suggestions to consider when planning Sportivate programmes that aim to get more girls involved and inspired.



2

Evidencing the need for more females taking part in Sportivate projects

On a national level there is an abundance of evidence to show a noticeable gap in the levels of activity between boys and girls, with the overall trend that males are more active than females. Some of the headline statistics for the Sportivate age group are:

Fewer females are taking part than males



There is a significant drop between the ages of **16 and 18**

There is a **7.4%** decrease in participation at age **16** compared to participation at **14**

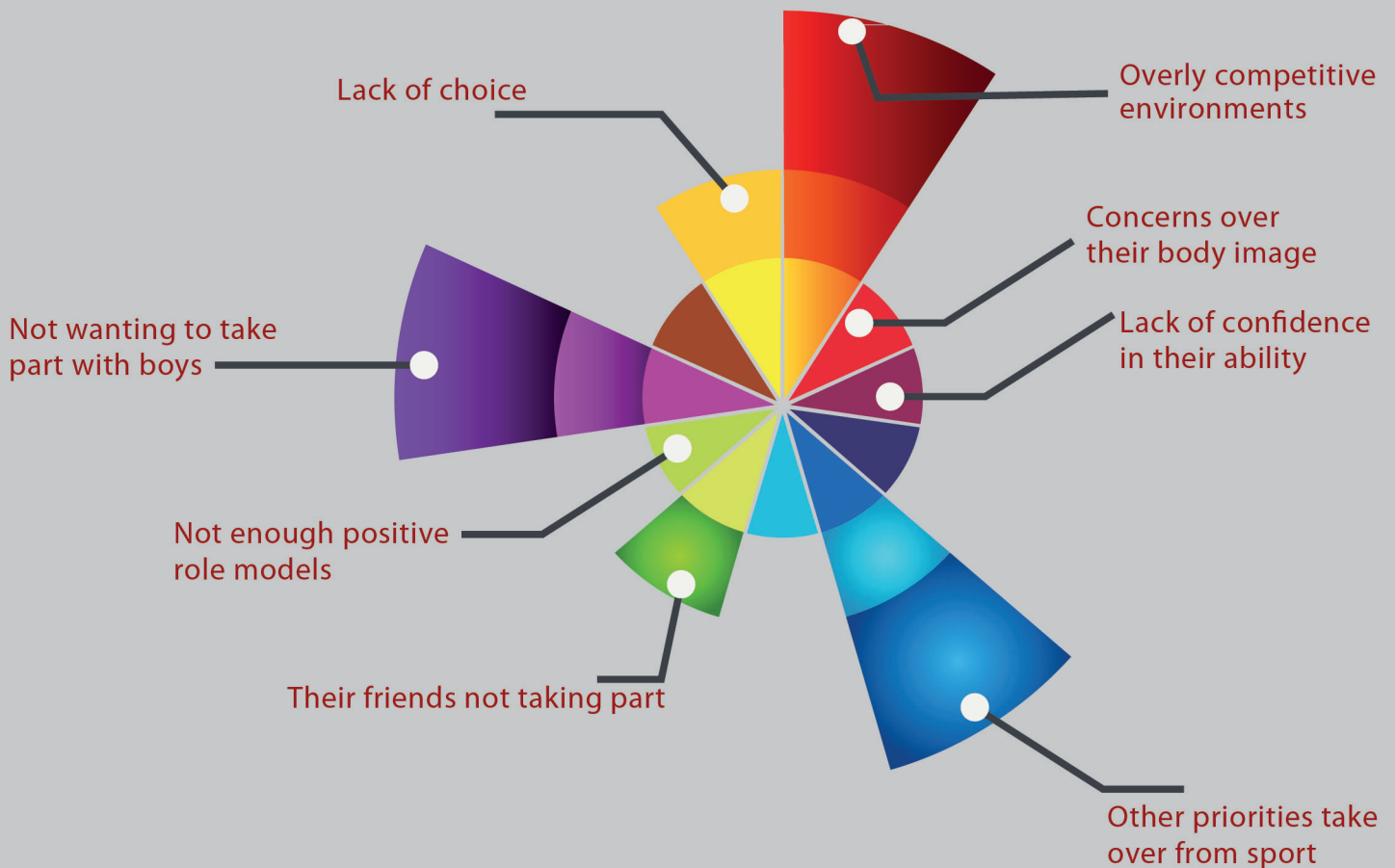
Gender divide is widest at ages 17 and 18, only **35% are female**



Female retention in the programme is **as good** as male retention once they have **been engaged effectively**

3 Understanding the motivators and the barriers

Understanding what motivates girls and what puts them off sport is important when looking at the type of activities that you are planning on running. Disseminating this knowledge to delivery partners is key as this will assist them in shaping the way the activities are provided. We know that some of the barriers for girls are:



There is a point where teenagers (typically aged 16) evaluate their interests. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that sport is given up completely, it often means the number of sports they participate in is reduced or their levels of participation drop.

Female's motivations and expectations are often different from males. It's often about health and social motivations – fun, family, flexibility – and about fitting sport and fitness into busy lives.



Understanding what motivates your group gives you the best chance of sustaining activity beyond the initial 6 weeks of funding.

Female only Sportivate funding rounds

To try and attract new applications from groups that you have not worked with before and to focus your work with girls, try a female focused funding round. **Make sure you:**



Keep your message clear and simple



Maximise your existing networks when getting the message out



Think about groups such as Girlguiding who have a workforce of over 100,000 volunteers and approximately 45,000 members and youth centres who also have access to high numbers of girls




Case Study




Pro Active East London received over 70 applications after they ran a female targeted funding round, investing over £40,000 , into local activities for girls. They maximised their existing networks and partners including clubs, sports councils, school networks, FE and HE groups and SDO's to promote this targeted funding round, as well as running a series of roadshows on club development to promote and disseminate the opportunity they had made available. Through this female focused funding, a number of new clubs and organisations have been supported as well as new relationships created. Partners include organisations whose aim is to support women in their local communities such as the Bajuni Women Advocacy Group, as well as traditional sports clubs such as swimming, and other activities such as karate and boxing. All completed projects have met their retention targets and have exit routes in place to ensure the girls can continue with the activity post the initial block of Sportivate funded activity.

 **What** do they want?

 **When** do they want it?

 **Where** do they want it?

Don't assume that you know what activities the participants want to take part in, make it a priority to let them tell you what they want. If they are unsure as to what they can do, make sure they know what provision can be made available to them that can be **sustained post the 6 weeks of Sportivate activity**. Girls believe that there is not enough choice around the type of activities that they can do, so make sure that they have the opportunity to input into what you choose to deliver. Questionnaires or informal chats can extract the information that you are looking for when trying to find out what it is the girls want to take part in.

-  Are there one or two members of the group that can lead the decision making process, giving more ownership and responsibility to the girls?
-  Give the girls the opportunity to input into when and where the session will run. If you are working in a community setting such as a youth centre, find out when most of the girls attend and try and build your session delivery time around that.
-  Can you access the facilities before the main sessions starts to avoid the potential pressure of boys looking in and discouraging some of the girls to take part?

Marketing



Getting the marketing right is key if you are going to get girls to sign up and have a go. If possible, work with a group of girls that are part of the target group you are trying to attract and get their input into what is 'cool' and attractive and what is not. This will also give them ownership over the programme and help with the promotion of the sessions. Read our [resource on Marketing for more top tips and information on this](#).

Finding the right person to deliver and act as a role model

Getting the right person to deliver the activity is key to keeping girls engaged. 51% of girls are put off by their experience of school sport by their PE teacher, suggesting that it is not always the 'sporty' individual that is best placed to deliver the session.

Where possible try and involve a peer in the delivery of the session, someone they can relate to and who can inspire them to want to get involved in sport and physical activity on a regular basis. **With 63% of women not feeling confident enough to approach a sports club**, the role of the coach is critical to participants' enjoyment – they are unlikely to return if they form a negative view of the coach.

Make sure that partners and organisations are aware that they can use Sportivate funding to invest in the workforce that will be leading the sessions.



Case Study

South Yorkshire Sport are working in partnership with Sheffield Hatters Basketball Club. "they have a really good network of connections with female PE teachers, some ex-players, which really helps to push with the girls. Having that link seems to be the real difference in engaging the young people. The use of club players and some current junior members really helped as it gave a good reference for the progression through to the club both at junior level and progressing through to the full squad. I think being able to see that journey long term is positive. The club have also developed a recreation session both for new young people who were still not sure about playing in full squads, also for those women who didn't want to make that jump or ex-players winding down".



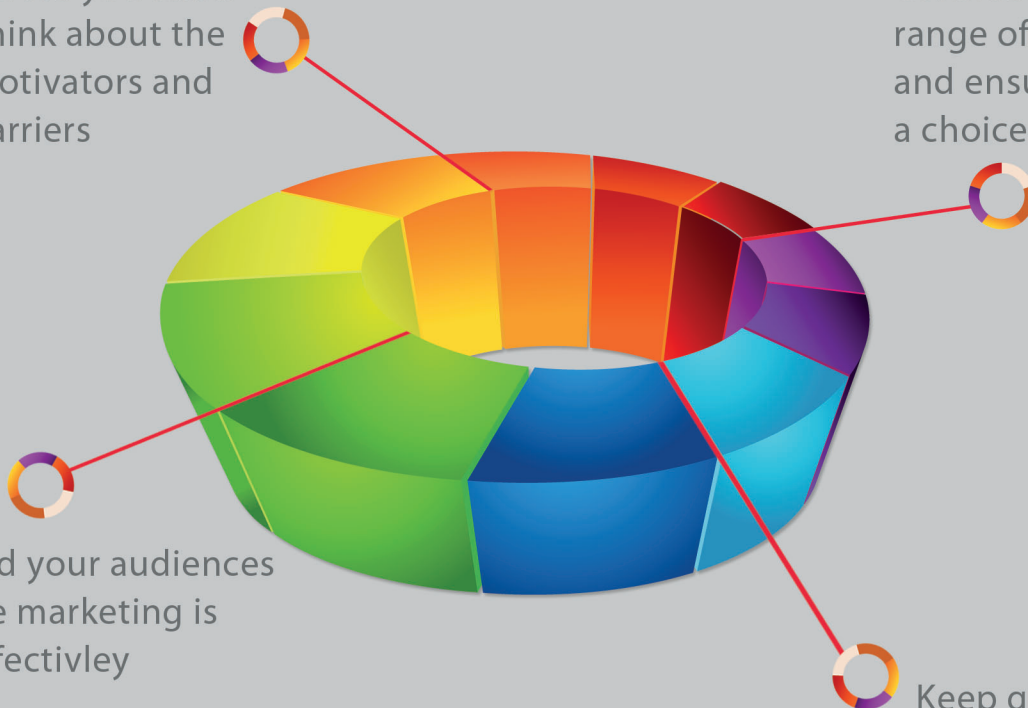
Whilst exit routes are vital for sustaining activity post Sportivate investment, for many girls having fun and taking part with their friends is a key driver. Don't assume that every participant will want to move up the player pathway into formal club coached sessions, make sure there is the opportunity for them to participate in an informal setting, where the focus is on recreation as opposed to forcing them through to more formalised sessions.

In a recent Further Education survey, **61% of females** said that a key motivation for them was to take part in an activity that was **'appropriate to their ability'**.

4 Important Points to Consider

Before you start:
Think about the
motivators and
barriers

Consider a wide
range of activities
and ensure there is
a choice



Understand your audiences
and ensure marketing is
tailored effectively

Keep girls engaged to
sustain their
participation

Other Supporting Research:



Evaluation of Active Colleges: Summary of student survey April 2013

26% of females had not participated in any sport or physical activity compared with only **19%** of males

Out of those that classified themselves as active, only **44%** of female students surveyed had taken part in sport or physical activity on three or more days in the past week compared to **61%** of males



83% of female non-participants agreed that there were physical health benefits of participating in sport"

67% of females agree that being more active allows them to

"feel more confident about their body image"



Changing the Game, for Girls:

WSFF research into girls participation at school

At year 6 girls are doing significantly less activity than boys with the gender gap increasing as they move into secondary school. Year **8 and 9** have emerged as key drop out points for girls



By the time **girls** leave school, they are only half as likely to meet the recommended levels of physical activity as **boys**

76% of girls surveyed **want to do more physical activity**