



Women's
SPORT AND
FITNESS
FOUNDATION

Creating a nation of active women

A framework for change

Sue Tibballs

Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation
Chief Executive

In November 2007, the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) published *It's time*, the ground-breaking research study which drew widespread public attention to the crisis in women's sport and fitness. Since then, recognition of the issue of women's inactivity has been gathering momentum across sport, media and Government, but until now, there has been no single, authoritative source of guidance and advice on how to address the crisis.

Creating a Nation of Active Women is the first national strategy to increase women's participation in physical activity. It has been produced by the WSFF to provide a clear and straightforward framework to effect change for those who develop policy and design and deliver sport and exercise for women.

But it is only the first step. The WSFF will use this strategy to continue to forge partnerships and engage with the organisations and individuals who will make a difference. Some of those are represented on the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, an initiative backed by Government, that will examine the issues of leadership, investment and profile in women's sport.

We are grateful to Scottish Widows, whose generous support made possible both *It's time* and Creating a Nation of Active Women. It should be applauded for its far-sighted investment in women's well-being and long-term future. We would also like to thank Sport England for its continued support for the WSFF and for backing this project in particular.

The WSFF is a small but professional and ambitious charity. We are passionately committed to realising the vision of a society that encourages, enables and celebrates fit and healthy women and girls. If, like us, you recognise that this is an issue of pressing national importance, we would very much like to hear from you.

Cameron Walker

Scottish Widows
Director of Corporate Communications

It's been a source of great pride to us at Scottish Widows to witness the tremendous national response to *It's time* and to have played a part in the rapid ascent of the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation. In particular, it's been most rewarding to see the interest which the charity has generated amongst its stakeholders in Government, sport and the media.

As an organisation that helps customers maintain their financial health, it's been important for us to continue our support for the WSFF in their work to provide answers to the crisis in women's physical activity. We've recently extended our involvement to support the WSFF's programme to encourage women MPs and MSPs to take part in regular physical activity and act as role models for other women with busy lives.

Our partnership with the WSFF is an integral element of Scottish Widows' programme to promote health and well-being in the community and complements our role as Official Pensions and Investment Provider of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Creating a Nation of Active Women is another pioneering body of work from the WSFF and we very much hope that it will make the great strides it deserves in improving the lives of women and girls across the UK.



Executive Summary

In November 2007, the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation's ground-breaking report, *It's time*, revealed the extent of the crisis in women's physical activity and committed to create this strategy to address the problem. The strategy is driven by the vision of a nation of active women, where sport and exercise is an integral part of everyday life.

Today by contrast we live in a nation where 80% of women don't even do enough physical activity to benefit their health. Half of young women feel society places greater pressure on them to be thin rather than healthy. Many are put off sport and exercise for life at school.

Creating a Nation of Active Women

is the first strategy for national change in this vitally important area. It describes a compelling vision, outlines a new approach, makes practical recommendations and advocates setting challenging targets. It provides a framework, comprising three key imperatives, for those who develop policy and design, and who deliver and promote sport and exercise for women and girls.

1. Give the customer what she wants

- Selling the existing product harder won't work. Policy-makers and activity providers must invest in understanding the needs of women - 51% of the population - and develop new products and experiences that compete successfully with how they currently choose to spend their time
- For most women, physical activity is not about winning. Their motivations and expectations are often different from men's. It's about health and social motivations – fun, family, flexibility – and about fitting sport and fitness into busy lives
- Women want the sort of high quality experience and customer service they enjoy in other environments. For sport and fitness that means clean swimming pools, showers that work, even hair straighteners in school changing rooms. It also means better signposting and support so that whether someone is new to a sport, or trying to move up to the next level, they can find what they are looking for, and enjoy a warm welcome when they get there
- For school age girls – a key target group - a wider range of activities should be available in all schools – like dance and yoga – and girls should be able to wear what they feel comfortable in

2. Create a society in which being active is attractive

- Girls grow up with a different set of expectations from boys: society teaches them that it's attractive to be decorative and passive rather than physically active. A new ideal of female beauty is needed; one that changes perceptions of body image and celebrates fit and healthy women and girls, holding them up as role models to give the rest the confidence and expectation to be active
- Sport must be redefined and re-branded to make it “cool” and “fun” for girls – the second priority identified in consultation. Women's sports and sportswomen need to be better promoted – and not just on the back pages. From the glossy magazines to newspapers, sportswomen should be celebrated across the media
- Women need to be better educated about the benefits of being active. The guidelines need to be reviewed so that they are memorable and useable, and then promoted in social marketing campaigns

3. Develop policies to improve leadership, investment and profile

- Adopting a customer-oriented approach and changing the prevailing culture requires a policy environment that leads and facilitates progress. Policies need to be clear, joined-up and rooted in strong consumer insight; clear commitments and targets need to be made, and progress measured
- A higher proportion of women are needed in senior positions – particularly in sport – to achieve critical mass, ensure better understanding of the women's market and to act as role models for others in the sector
- Existing and new equalities legislation needs to be utilised by encouraging cases to be brought and better promoting the risks to agencies that fail in their duty to women
- Public investment in sport and fitness needs to be tracked to ensure women enjoy its benefits. Ring-fenced funding for women's sport remains the most popular initiative in consultation
- Women's sport should enjoy a greater share of commercial revenues, not just as part of good CSR, but also as a sound commercial investment in the future

No single organisation alone will make this happen. Government has stated its commitment and now needs to say how it will achieve change, but success requires the collaborative leadership of all stakeholders.

Based on consumer research and industry consultation, this strategy offers advice and guidance for each of them: Government, Local Authorities, Sports Councils, County Sport Partnerships, National Governing Bodies, the private leisure sector, business and the media. This is an explicit invitation to all to work directly with the WSFF to create specific and detailed plans for their areas of responsibility.

Creating a Nation of Active Women provides the framework to address the crisis detailed in *It's time*, but it's more than a strategy for change. It is a stark call-to-action for those with the power and responsibility to effect that change. A national target has been set for two million more people to be more active by 2012, of which at least one million should be women. But with 24 million women not doing enough physical activity, that should be only the beginning.

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The context



The context

1.1 Crisis!

There is a crisis in women's sport and fitness in the UK. More than 80% of women and girls are not doing enough physical activity to benefit their health. Young women are now half as active as young men. The situation is forecast to get even worse over the next ten years.

The WSFF's ground-breaking research study, *It's time*, revealed the extent and complexity of the problem and predicted that participation rates could fall by another five and a half per cent by 2017 without urgent and informed action. At the time, the WSFF undertook to develop the first-ever national strategy to address the very different range of barriers, motivations and incentives to being active that are specific to women and girls.

Using the findings from *It's time* and following further in-depth consultation, Creating a Nation of Active Women sets out the strategic direction and approach that will help policy-makers and providers understand how to shape the extensive actions necessary to make physical activity an integral part of life for women and girls in the UK.

1.2 Prize of success

Women's health and fitness is not a minority issue. It is a national issue. There are more than 30 million women and girls in the UK – over half of the population – so the stakes are exceptionally high. But just as the cost of failure to remedy and reverse the situation is critically serious, so the prize of success offers vital benefits on a national scale.

Cost of physical inactivity

The lack of physical activity in England costs the country some £8.2billion every year. This figure is made up of health service costs to treat obesity and the associated sickness absence from work. If obesity continues to rise nationally at current rates, it could cost the UK £46billion by 2050. In just 20 years from now, it is predicted that seven out of every ten women will be overweight.

Benefits of a nation of active women

Social benefits

Playing sport and exercising increases physical health and mental well-being, which in turn:

- reduces costs to the NHS of treating disease linked to inactivity
- reduces sickness absence at work and increases productivity and staff retention
- reduces the level of teenage pregnancies as many studies show that girls who participate regularly in sport delay their first sexual experience

- increases energy levels, confidence and self-esteem, providing women with a greater capacity to successfully manage the demands of career, home, family and community, with mothers setting an active role model for their daughters
- produces a cohesive community in which individual women meet and socialise with others while sharing a common enjoyment of physical activity
- reduces reliance on unhealthy dieting and the type of body control that leads to eating disorders
- ensures greater levels of academic achievement, with many studies showing the link between increasing physical activity and better exam results
- benefits the environment as more women leave their cars at home and walk and cycle instead

Sport and fitness economy: the commercial imperative

Women now own 48% of personal wealth in the UK, which is set to rise to 60% by 2020. 87% of consumer purchasing decisions are made by women.

A nation of active women represents a considerable potential market to every element of the commercial sector targeting an audience with an involvement and interest in sport and exercise; from television sports channels and traditional health and fitness brands to entrepreneurs seeking to create new products and services for fitter and healthier women and girls.

2012: the nation's reputation on the line

Elite sporting success, increased grassroots participation, the legacy of a fitter and healthier nation and a world-class community sports system. All national commitments made by government and sport, as part of securing the greatest show on earth. All of which will be under the spotlight from this summer, with reputations to be made or broken.

London 2012 has been billed as the catalyst for change and it can be, but only if substantive progress is made in taking the necessary action to ensure that women and girls are physically active.

So the prize is significant, far-reaching and on a national scale, with implications for the UK's standing at home and abroad. But in order to realise the prize, sport and exercise providers, businesses and the media must take a different approach to the majority of the population - women and girls - than they do to men and boys.

1.3 What is this strategy?

Creating a Nation of Active Women gives those responsible for providing sport and exercise in the UK a strategic framework in which to develop the policies and initiatives that will make and keep women and girls more active. It is the first high-level strategic direction and recommended approach dedicated to increasing female participation across the range of sport and exercise activities.

Specifically, it:

- recommends a customer-oriented approach for developing strategies to increase participation, that invests in understanding what women want from sport and fitness and making sure it meets their expectations
- describes what the vision of a nation of active women means in practice, contrasts that with the current reality and outlines what will motivate women to be physically active
- identifies the three key strategic imperatives that comprise the framework to drive all initiatives and interventions
- illustrates how this approach can be applied to create specific opportunities for key target groups
- identifies those responsible for delivering increased participation and recommends how they should work together to achieve this
- suggests how success should be measured

Understanding the opportunity, demonstrating the potential and setting the direction for success is the first step to inform and motivate those with the responsibility to act and the power to effect change.

1.4 Who should be interested and why it matters to them

This report is designed to provide both a strategic framework and practical guidance for concerted action by all the major stakeholders who have a part to play in increasing levels of physical activity among women. Each has a highly vested interest in understanding and adopting its recommendations, in being involved in developing and implementing the solutions and ultimately, in collaborating comprehensively to realise their opportunity.

Central Government

Government has an established target to get two million people more active by 2012. It also has agreed a series of 30 Public Service Agreement targets, one of which (PSA 21) is entitled Build More Cohesive, Empowered and Active Communities. Increased participation in sport is one of six measures that they will use to hold themselves accountable against this target. The Government also announced it would launch a cross-department review of where responsibility for Physical Activity should lie, given that it has been removed from Sport England's remit.

Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

The DCMS vision for sport and the 2012 legacy, "Playing to Win: A New Era for Sport", (published in 2008) includes goals to increase participation and expand the talent pool of sportsmen and women in England.

Department of Health (DH)

As part of the cross-government programme, Healthy Weight: Healthy Lives, DH has a responsibility to delivering increases in physical activity, including delivering a £30million Healthy Communities Challenge Fund.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Not only do schools have a target of ensuring all children receive at least two hours of quality PE or sport a week within the curriculum, there is now an additional target to ensure that children have an extra three hours of positive activities (including sport) outside the curriculum.

Building Schools for the Future is a £3billion a year programme of re-building or renewing every secondary school in Britain. Sports facilities will play a major part in the majority of these capital works.

Local government

Local authorities are the biggest investors in community sport, spending some £1.6billion per year. New Local Area Agreements (introduced in 2008) give councils a greater role in identifying local priorities. National Indicator 8 is 'Adult Participation in Sport' and over half of Local Area Agreements include it as a key priority as councils recognise the cross-cutting benefits sport brings.

Sports councils

Each of the four home country Sports Councils are responsible for increasing participation in sport. In addition, in its 2008-2011 strategy, Sport England set itself targets to reduce 16-18 year olds from dropping out of sport, to increase satisfaction levels regarding sport and to improve the talent pathways in sports to allow individuals to reach their potential. UK Sport is also key in helping elite sportswomen reach their potential.

National governing bodies of sport (NGBs)

NGBs are responsible for the safe keeping of their sport, and in England have been asked by Sport England to work towards three outcomes; Grow, Sustain and Excel. They have also been told by DCMS and Sport England that failure to work with women and girls will mean their allocation of public funding will get transferred to other sports.

Youth Sport Trust

The Youth Sport Trust has a key role to play in making sure girls have a positive experience of PE and sport in school.

County sport partnerships (CSPs)

CSPs provide a strategic overview of sport at a county level and are key to creating partnerships and capacity to address the issues faced in that area.

Private leisure sector

A rare area in which female customers outnumber men, its once-prolific growth is falling into decline and churn among health club membership has become a major concern.

Commercial sector

Women are arguably the biggest untapped market in sport and a fit, healthy and happy workforce is more productive and loses fewer days through sickness. Additionally with 2012 on the horizon, health and fitness will become the new CSR frontier.

Media

Commercially-driven media will find that coverage of women's sport and a more accurate representation of women and girls in society will prove not only increasingly profitable, but essential in a changing culture.

1.5 Approach and consultation

A customer orientated approach

Harry Gordon Selfridge, the founder of London's Selfridges store is credited with championing the use of the famous phrase: "the customer is always right". Certainly, there's a simple premise recognised by every successful business, such as Selfridges:

"give the customer what they want, or your competitors will".

Sport and fitness, as a business and a product, is losing out to any number of competitors for women's increasingly limited time and increasingly greater spending power. The reason is simple: the competition has invested in understanding what women want and is giving it to them

If there is one over-riding lesson that Creating a Nation of Active Women has to offer its audience – and sport and exercise providers in particular – it is this: start treating women as customers and give them what they want, or they will continue to spend their time and money on those things that do.

And it is undoubtedly worth making the investment: the overwhelming majority of women say they would play more sport and do more exercise if only the experience better met their needs. Women and girls - not the internal concerns or politics of the sport and fitness sector or Government – must be placed at the heart of the strategy.

Terminology

To enhance the flow of language, the term "women" may be used to include both women and girls.

Consultation

This strategy was generated by a process of consultation conducted by Ipsos MORI and the guidance of an expert working group, as well as the analysis of existing marketing research. In-depth interviews were conducted with 29 senior policy-makers and practitioners and around 367 individuals took part in an online survey. Full details of the research and consultation methodology are contained in the Technical Appendix.



The vision and reality

2



2.1 The vision: a nation of active women

1. Five-star facilities

From hair straighteners to clear sign-posting; sport needs to take a leaf out of the retail book to offer women facilities which are welcoming, easy to navigate, clean and of a high standard.

2. Picture this

Approximately 2% of articles in the sports pages of national newspapers are devoted to female athletes and women's sport.

68% of women believe that the media sets an unrealistic standard of beauty.

A culture that celebrates active women needs to be created. Part of this process requires the birth of aspirational role models who show women that being fit and healthy is realistic, beneficial and attractive.

3. Sports days

Only a quarter of girls believe it is cool to play sport or important to be good at it.

Schools need to work hard in order to foster a positive experience of sport and activity within girls. Activity should be fun and interesting and stretch across the whole curriculum - assemblies, lessons, break times, as well as PE.

4. Team effort

61% of women would exercise more if there were more opportunities for families to exercise together.

Giving women the chance to exercise alongside their family will motivate more to take part themselves, whilst becoming a positive role model for a future generation of budding athletes.

5. Home grown enthusiasm

From dancing in the living room, having a kick about in the garden, working out with Wii Fit, an active lifestyle needs to be fostered at home.

6. Sister act

64% of women would exercise more if they had a friend to be active with.

Activities and facilities should be designed to create and encourage friends to play sport and exercise together, whilst promoted as an opportunity to meet and make new friends.

7. Winning at work

77% of working mothers would like to fit exercise in with more flexible hours at work.

A fit and healthy workforce is shown to be more profitable and there's great opportunity for businesses to carry the health and fitness baton as part of their CSR agenda.

With the provision of flexible working hours, childcare, changing facilities and facilitation of organised sport, the workplace can act as a strong sports 'provider' for women.

2.2 The reality: how things are today

Understanding the crisis

The WSFF's report, *It's time*, revealed the extent of the crisis in women's sport and fitness:

- More than **80%** of women do too little physical activity to benefit their health
- Young women aged between 16 to 24 are half as active as young men
- Less than three per cent of women play competitive team sports
- Low income, black and ethnic minority women are even less active

To put the challenge of realising the vision into perspective, despite a significant rise in the number of women who think it is important to be healthy, there has been almost no change in the level of women's physical activity in the UK in the last 20 years.

Understanding the challenge

A detailed analysis of *It's time* is essential for the development of solutions to increase participation, but in summary, it showed that there are two distinct issues from women's perspective that must be addressed:

1. Women have very different personal motivations to be physically active than men. Their needs and expectations from sport and exercise – and its provision – are similarly different. In addition, women are far from being a homogeneous collective, with significant differences in physical activity levels existing between different groups of women.

2. Society places a wholly different and specific set of expectations on girls and women than it does on men, in relation to being physically active, effectively creating a prevailing culture that discourages women from participating.

Understanding women's motivations

Understanding how to increase women's physical activity demands a close examination of how women experience sport and exercise today. Even at a high level, existing research shows that women have a very different participation profile to that of men:

- Half as many women play organised sport as men
- Only **36%** per cent of women enjoy the competitiveness of sport, compared to **61%** of men
- For men, the most popular sport is a competitive team sport, football, played by **13%**; compared to just **1%** of women, for whom football is the 12th most popular activity, equal with Pilates

It's time outlines several key insights that sport and fitness should consider.

Time and control

Two-thirds of women in the UK feel they never have enough time to get things done. Women remain the primary parent and home-maker and yet now enter the workplace in equal numbers to men. Working women and working mothers in particular, face the greatest demands in their daily lives. They have greater time pressures than men and also choose from a wider range of activities in how to use their leisure time.

Sport and fitness have to be seen as just one part of an extended leisure portfolio enjoyed by affluent consumers in an advanced consumer society. The number and range of leisure activities in the UK has almost doubled since 1970. Women – with more time pressures and the increasing control over how to spend their leisure time and money, provided by growing affluence – have a wider range of other activities from which to choose. They are prioritising these over physical activity. Sport and fitness must compete successfully to become a priority for women's time.

Sport and exercise facilities

Women's poor assessment of the current general provision of sport and exercise facilities, in terms of their quality and convenience in particular, is a major barrier to participation. Improvement in facilities would make a significant difference to women's inclination to be physically active.

- **55%** of women would exercise more if local facilities were of a better quality
- **64%** of women would exercise more if there were more facilities in their local area and they were cheaper

Perceptions of health

60% of women believe they do enough activity to benefit their health and yet only 19% actually do. However, 86% of women said they would choose to exercise more if they thought their health was at risk, indicating the potential positive effect of a public awareness campaign.

Enjoyment, socialising and family

Enjoyment, social inter-action and the opportunity to exercise with family are key motivators for women to choose to be active.

- **64%** of women would exercise more if they had a friend to be active with
- **61%** of women would exercise more if there were more opportunities for families to exercise together
- **81%** of women with dependent children say that being able to exercise with their children would encourage them to exercise more

Work and family

With 70% of women now working and a fit and healthy workforce shown to be more profitable, employers will find it in their interests to consider broader provision for working mothers in order to remain competitive, as 77% of working mothers would like to fit exercise in with more flexible hours at work.

Cultural barriers

Women's choice of whether or not to spend their time playing sport and exercising is driven by a set of conscious motivators, such as time and control, enjoyment, socialising and family, but also by underlying motivations that are influenced by a prevailing culture that takes effect from women's most formative years.

Body image: greater pressure to be thin than healthy

Attitudes set by a media-led society have created a culture in which it is more important for women and girls to be attractive than active.

- Nearly half of 25–34 year olds feel under more pressure to be thin than healthy
- **88%** per cent of women believe that there is too much pressure to be thin
- **68%** of women believe that the media sets an unrealistic standard of beauty

A healthy, active female body is less likely to conform to the cultural ideal of the size zero fashion model and as a consequence, women grow up both aspiring and encouraged to be passively decorative rather than physically active. Boys, in contrast, are encouraged to play sport and to be good at it brings considerable admiration and popularity.

This is evidenced by girls' earliest experiences of physical activity at school, where discomfort and a lack of confidence with their bodies being active is matched by an alienating experience and environment and negative peer group expectations of sport.

- **23%** of women say that PE at school put them off sport for life
- Only a quarter of girls believe it is cool to play sport or important to be good at it
- **30%** of girls do not like their PE kit
- **40%** feel self-conscious about their bodies in PE lessons
- **26%** of women were never encouraged to play sport and hate the way they look when they are physically active

The need to focus

Little wonder then, that the vast majority of women are not regularly playing sport or exercising. Physical activity, as it is currently produced, packaged and presented, doesn't currently coincide with most women's motivations as to how they wish to spend their time, so they're choosing to spend it on the things that do, in a society that has set their attitudes in childhood and continually reinforces and validates their decisions in adult life.

Sport and fitness desperately needs a clear and definitive strategy to understand and appeal to women and successfully compete for their attention.



The strategic framework

3

The strategic framework

3.1 The strategic imperatives

The strategic framework is the core of Creating a Nation of Active Women. The framework offers policy-makers and providers of sport and fitness a structured approach in which to:

- develop and deliver appropriate sport and exercise
- create the supportive culture
- facilitate the enabling conditions necessary for women to make regular physical activity an integral part of their daily lives.

Designing the framework: bottom-up and top-down

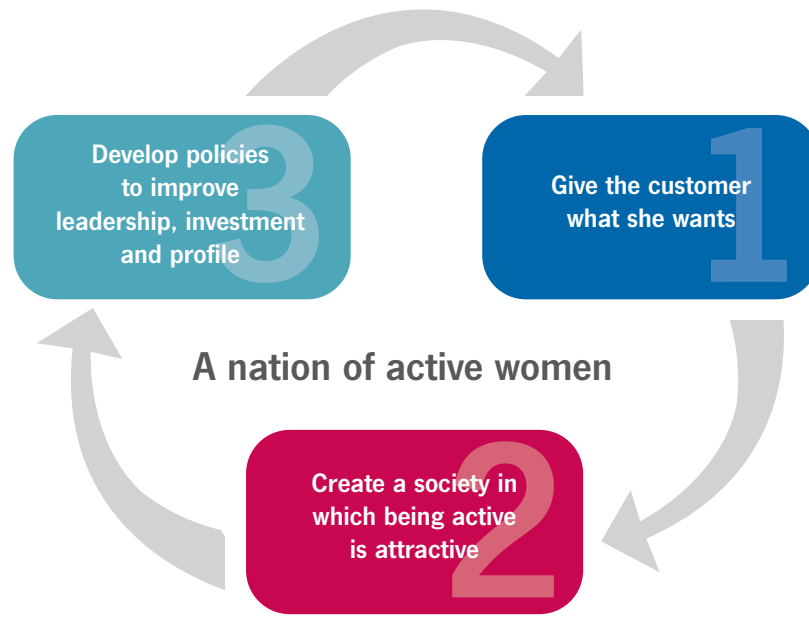
The strategic imperatives have been shaped primarily by an analysis of the consumer and cultural insight provided by *It's time* and through in-depth stakeholder consultation.

The consensus that has emerged is that an increase in women's participation can only be achieved by combining:

- a "bottom-up" approach, based on understanding women's motivations and the prevailing culture of the society that influences their choices
- a "top-down" approach, which ensures that at a national level, appropriate policies and adequate resource are in place to enable specific provision for women and influence cultural change

The framework for change

The following three strategic imperatives create the structure or framework for change, which is based on extensive research and analysis. The framework gives policy-makers and providers of sport and exercise the focused, strategic direction necessary to create and sustain a nation of active women.



1

Customer orientation

It's time highlighted the problem: most women do not play sport or exercise because other things better meet the motivations and needs that drive the choice of how they spend their leisure time.

Sport and fitness must treat women as customers.

Women - 51% of the population - are not a "hard to reach" minority. If women's participation is to grow, sport and fitness need to be much more responsive to women as a market; specifically the sector must not sell its existing product harder, but understand what that product would look like if designed for and by women.

Those employing successful, customer-oriented strategies follow the basic rules of supply and demand, which the sport and fitness sector must adopt:

- Identify your audience, understand and anticipate their needs, then develop and deliver a product at the right price in the right place to supply those needs.
- Research and invest in differentiated, targeted marketing and communications to promote your product and help create demand.
- Retain and make advocates and role models of your customers.

Thus the first strategic imperative required to create a nation of active women is to:

Give the customer what she wants

Identify, understand and anticipate women's motivations and expectations and develop, deliver and promote an experience of sport and exercise that meets their needs and competes successfully with the other choices available to them.

2

Culture change

To make physical activity an integral part of daily life for the majority of women, society needs to enable, encourage and celebrate fit and healthy women. We currently live in a society that enables, encourages and celebrates thin women, whose role tends to be passive and decorative and who are often neither fit nor healthy.

However, given that the decorative role of women has been dominant for millennia and ironically, moreover, is one that most women enjoy (and loathe in equal measure), the key to success is to not to endeavour to change the notion that women should be beautiful, but to change the perception of

what constitutes beauty; in other words to work from the inside and exert a more subtle influence, namely: to make active attractive.

Consequently, society needs to teach women and girls that it's attractive to be active and that the most important physical priority is to be healthy rather than thin. Girls must be encouraged to play sport and exercise at school, just as boys are, women need to understand the importance of an active lifestyle and fit and healthy women must be aspirational role models.

The second strategic imperative required to create a nation of active women is to:

Create a society in which being active is attractive

Make being active attractive in society by making sport and exercise relevant to girls, broadening the beauty "ideal", educating and enabling women to adopt everyday active lifestyles and making fit and healthy women cultural role models.

3

Policy direction

Adopting a customer-oriented approach and creating a supportive cultural or market environment are two-thirds of the challenge: the "bottom-up" approach that's based on understanding women themselves. Alone, however, these will not be sufficient to create a nation of active women. Policies to provide leadership and investment to facilitate product design and development and cultural change are also imperative.

This is highlighted by analysis of the sports sector through the WSFF's 2008 Women in Sport Audit, together with further in-depth consultation as part of this report.

The 2008 Women in Sport Audit describes a sector which has yet to become a place for women:

- Of the 35 National Governing Bodies funded by Sport England, just four have a female chief executive
- A crude analysis of Sport England funding shows that only 36% of monies spent by NGBs benefits women, despite women making up 51% of the population
- Between two and five per cent of sports coverage in newspapers is dedicated to women's sport

In consultation, sport itself believes that ring-fenced public funding for women's sport is the single most important thing that could be done to increase female participation.⁽⁴⁾ Government leadership is seen as critical to balance the male domination of the sector. Using equality legislation and developing policies to create equal investment funding, to encourage female leadership that will understand women and provide role models and to state explicitly the desire and support for change and place an onus on the sector to achieve this.

In short, the customer-led, bottom-up approach will only work if a policy-led, top-down approach is implemented simultaneously to create a holistic environment for success, identifying the need for a third imperative to complete the strategic framework:

Develop policies to improve leadership, investment and profile

Policy-makers must co-ordinate policies, commit to increase female leadership, distribute funding equally and invest in promoting women's sport and fitness and persuade others to do the same.



Delivering a nation
of active women

4

Delivering a nation of active women

4.1 Applying the strategic framework

Part of the WSFF's consultancy role is to inform the design and delivery process and to share best practice and high-level advice with stakeholders throughout the sport and fitness sector. Guidance on applying the framework and illustrative case studies are provided here, organised by each of the three strategic imperatives.

The ultimate goal should be to create a model for life-long participation, beginning at home, continuing through school, further and higher education, into the workplace and throughout the community to a retirement that's more enjoyable for an active lifestyle.

Customer orientation

Understand the customer to satisfy her needs

Identify, understand and anticipate women's motivations and expectations and develop, deliver and promote an experience of sport and exercise that meets their needs and competes successfully with the other choices available to them.

Quality of delivery and experience: learning from the retail sector

No sector caters more successfully for women than retail: the ultimate consumer-oriented industry. Retailers have developed a deep understanding of women's needs and have consequently designed not only products that appeal to women but also amenities that maximise time and money spent.

The key lesson for sport and fitness to learn from retail is to improve the quality of delivery and experience; and ensure that the product is adapted to exceed the demands and expectations of women. For some women, the buzz of competition and the thirst for success is their key motivation, just as it is in some men; however for most other women the following elements are more important when creating activities that women want to participate in and venues that women want to spend time at:

- Visually attractive and clean venues and changing rooms
- A choice of activities, without unrealistic on-going time commitments
- The ability to participate at the appropriate level of competitiveness and to progress along the talent pathway as far as desired
- High quality customer care, including coaching and teaching
- The ability to socialise alongside the activity
- Safety (particularly at night)
- The opportunity to participate with friends or family
- Easily accessible locations
- Effective marketing and signposting tailored to the target audience
- Incentives for continued participation

It is encouraging to note that in its 2008-2011 Strategy, Sport England place a high emphasis on participant or customer satisfaction. This will hopefully encourage NGBs to improve the quality of the product they provide. This is a huge opportunity to consider placing women at the heart of sports provision.

Marks & Spencer

When Sir Stuart Rose took over the M&S reins in 2004 he inherited a brand in trouble; the toast of the high street was losing market share to more stylish and cheaper rivals whilst fending off a hostile takeover bid.

Having previously worked on the shop floor, Rose recognised that M&S had stopped listening to its customers and as a result, lost its way. Key to turning the company around would be to re-establish a close relationship with customers, in particular women. By listening and responding to its audience, M&S restyled its in store proposition to provide:

- A great range of affordable basics, cut to fit and flatter rather than slavishly follow fashion

- Key sub and what were to become halo brands such as Per Una and Autograph, which connected with niche customers and demonstrated M&S' flair for fashion

- A shopping environment that was attractive, easy to navigate and consistent throughout the country

- Service levels to delight their customers.

A major advertising campaign was launched to support the new look. Through its strap line 'Your M&S' the company immediately made the relationship with its customers feel more personal.

The result of listening to its customers and designing products and services which fit their needs saw a turnaround in M&S' fortunes.

School changing rooms

Kirkintilloch High School (as part of the SportsScotland Fit For Girls)

"I hated getting changed.. it is dull and felt dirty... horrible to get changed in.. never any paper towels at the sinks.. there were no mirrors.. didn't make me want to do PE."

Girls were clear that they would feel more positive towards PE if their changing rooms were more polished. Their gripes were turned into a 'wish-list' which once negotiated with staff, formed the basis of a to-do list. Ten girls volunteered to stay after school to help with the make-over which saw graffiti wiped out, walls brightened and inspirational images of women in sport hung.

As a result of the more female-friendly changing rooms, registers show improved attendance and the girls have raised their game surrounding the aftercare of the facilities. As a finishing touch, mirrors will be added soon.

Family-oriented provision

Sport and exercise facilities and programmes should allow parents and children to be active together. Mothers should, for instance, not be left poolside when their daughters go swimming, they should be encouraged into the pool or supported into another activity; outdoor family “sport packs” should be subsidised to encourage more structured family play in the garden, at the park or on the beach. More thought should be given to sport and activity family holidays.

Social motivation and enjoyment

Activities and facilities should be designed to create and encourage friends to play sport and exercise together and activity positioned as being fun, rather than competitive and an opportunity to meet and make new friends. Sport and activity and their facilities should be positioned at the heart of the community.

Flexibility: time and personal choice

"Research suggests that changing lifestyles mean people are becoming more interested in bite-sized sports and sports they can do on their own. If activities are on offer on a sufficient scale that genuinely meet the needs of women, or particular groups of women, then I see no reason why participation rates can't eventually catch up to those we currently see amongst men."

Mihir Warty, Sport England

Getting mum off the sideline Turves Green Little League Netball

Set up in 2006 in Birmingham, this scheme offers sixty girls aged 8 - 11 years the chance to receive coaching and play league netball regardless of ability to play or pay. Even kit is provided free of charge. The league really is a team effort involving the local community; local business sponsor the teams, schools help by promoting the opportunities (although teams are not school teams) and mothers of the girls taking part act as team managers and sit on the committee.

Many of the women involved in the scheme began reminiscing about when they used to play, and how they were 'itching' to get on the court. In response, 'Return to Netball' sessions were set up and scheduled to follow the children's coaching sessions. Led by a qualified coach, fifteen to twenty women now take part and some of the managers have attended NGB Umpiring and Coaching courses.

It works because netball is a sport that the majority of women are comfortable with, as they played at school. Watching the children in a mainly female environment showed them that being sporty is OK and achievable.

Joggingbuddies Paisley jogging network

Whether a beginner or training for a marathon, Joggingbuddies aims to help everyone improve their quality of life, its work includes two innovative schemes:

Active Families is designed to get children and parents teaming up and experiencing the fun of exercising together. From warm-ups to running games, relays to ball games, water bombs to wet sponges, hopscotch to skipping, children love the variety and having their parents to play with. But so it's not all 'child's play', bigger kids also have the opportunity to jog with a qualified coach.

Mams'n'Prams is an exercise scheme designed to allow mums to bring baby too. The sessions consist of walking, light aerobics, and exercises to gently get new mums back into shape. As well as the honing and toning, the sessions are just as much about meeting other mums and having fun as getting fit. It also removes the need to worry about finding a babysitter while working out.

Brighton and Hove Running Sisters

Set up by a number of friends who wanted to run together socially, but not necessarily competitively Brighton and Hove Running Sisters is a women only group and provides an opportunity to exercise as a team, but in an individual sport. The focus is on socialising, making new friends, but doing their best. The sisters accept anyone, especially newcomers.

Successfully integrating physical activity into busy lives requires flexibility and creativity in terms of time and choices on offer. Schools and workplaces are two key examples of where there is considerable potential for success.

Schools

- Introduce physical activity into the whole curriculum - assemblies, lessons and break times, as well as PE

- Encourage collaboration and contribution from all staff

- Allow girls to design their own PE kit

- Research and provide activities which girls want to do

Workplaces

In addition to the proven productivity benefits of a fit and healthy workforce, forward-looking employers will realise that the 2012 environment will make health and fitness “the new CSR frontier”. There are several key initiatives from which employers will enjoy a return on investment.

The Energy Project WSFF

In 2007, the WSFF launched an initiative for schools aimed at tackling the increasing levels of physical inactivity amongst young girls. A collaboration with the Helen Storey Foundation and Creative Partnerships London, The 'Energy Project', was created to increase energy levels, by experimenting with ways to build physical activity into the whole school day.

Where traditional sports-led approaches have struggled, the project adopted a fresh approach; looking at ways to help staff improve students' energy levels as well as recommending some key tips to help girls themselves get active.

“The exploration we wanted to embark on was to look at the timetable and human energy side by side, and see if there were better ways of being able to teach and learn.

- Provide sport, exercise, showers and changing facilities at work

- Allow flexible hours for staff to play sport or exercise at any time during the day and at the weekends, particularly with friends and family

- Provide crèches at work to allow working mothers to exercise during the day and have onsite childcare from early until late to facilitate flexible hours

- Allow time off to volunteer in sport

- Work based sports teams for example corporate mixed-sex softball leagues are growing

Just as we no longer think that creativity lives only in the art room, we must not think that healthy living exists only in the PE lesson.” Professor Helen Storey, The Helen Storey Foundation.

Throughout the programme, the schools involved made small changes to the school day (all outside of PE lessons) to increase energy levels and deliver health benefits for girls. These included activities such as cheerleading, breakfast clubs, yoga, power walking and gospel singing.

Energy levels were directly monitored, using “accelerometers”. Girls and teachers all reported a positive impact on learning and behaviour.

“I'd like to see women being able to access sport during work hours more easily and being given time off work to do fitness programmes during the day. Time demands on women are so high that if it's not available within the workplace for the majority of women then it's very difficult to fit in”.

Avril Saunders, Trafford Sport Development

Community design and promotion

Increasingly, central and local government are considering the integration of sport and exercise facilities into the design and construction of communities which enables seamless use as an integral part of a daily active lifestyle. For example:

- Permanent sports facilities integrated into outdoor spaces, such as all-weather five-a-side football pitches, table tennis tables and basketball courts
- Circuit training facilities in parks
- Better use of community facilities (Building Schools for the Future is a huge opportunity for this)
- Jogging tracks and cycle paths
- Safe, convenient and attractive walking routes

“Our unique approach is the holistic thinking about how environments can encourage people to be active and make women feel safe – and feel able to fit it into their busy days alongside family commitments and jobs.

Keep it broad – in thinking about sports don't forget about all the informal activity, in thinking about leisure centres don't forget about parks and spaces and streets that get people to those centres”.
Polly Turton, The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

Pricing

Policy-makers and activity providers need to research and test pricing options. ‘Pay and play’, ‘free tasters’, incentives for regular participation, and family or group pricing all have their place; as does the introduction of subsidised and free activities on a permanent basis by government. The introduction (in 2008) of free swimming for pensioners and young people is a good start.

Brand association

In creating new experiences, sport and exercise providers should consider partnerships with popular brands that women like, trust and associate with their motivations and expectations, such as retailers. Fashion and cosmetics brands will benefit from investing in sport and fitness programmes in order to target fitter and healthier women and to develop new products for this market.

If You Let Her Dance Nike

Hip hop superstar and professional choreographer Kymberlee Jay knows how to work it. Thanks to her, more than 2500 young women have had the opportunity to attend dance sessions regardless of their social or economic status. For some, it marks the first time ever taking a dance class. For others, the first time finding something within themselves.

Hosted by London's top dance academy, Laban, the workshops introduce women to different types of dance, with some classes lasting up to three hours. The focus is on building self-esteem through self expression and the results have been amazing. Growing from the initial Nike Rockstar Live weekend, the project has now expanded into a year long programme where women can attend free community dance classes weekly.

“It's always been about the boys, the boys that are causing trouble, the boys need some activities. And this was a great opportunity for us to say that this is for the girls, this is for the girls in the community. And that really helps to raise self-esteem.”
Mandy Ayres, Nike

Effective marketing

“If you build it, they will come” will no longer suffice. If time and resource have been taken to redesign activity and locate it in a female friendly environment, further investment in appropriate, targeted marketing is critical, including local newspapers, local authority websites, NGB promotions, community hall notices and social networking websites.

Multi-motivational activities

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the most successful forms of physical activity combine several key motivators that facilitate the integration of sport and exercise into daily life, such as:

- Charity fun runs (sociable, altruistic, healthy)
- Cycling to work (travel, health)
- Family activity holidays (family activity, relaxation)
- Outdoor activities and ‘green gyms’ (environment, love of outdoors)

Race for Life Cancer Research UK

Race for Life has become the UK's largest women-only fundraising event and now generates 20% of the charity's fundraising income. It is a good example of a non-traditional model for sport and provides some pointers as to what motivates women to get active:

- Fundraising, rather than competition – is the motivation; there are no official lists of times, just finishers, who all get medals and a goody bag
- The range of options – walk/jog/run – makes it accessible to a very wide range of women
- The atmosphere of mutual support and encouragement is key
- Ownership is shared between the charity and the participants
- Sponsors like to work with Race for Life because of its women-only status

Culture change

Create a society in which being active is attractive

Make being active attractive in society by making sport and exercise relevant to girls, broadening the beauty “ideal”, educating and enabling women to adopt everyday active lifestyles and making fit and healthy women cultural role models.

Defining the challenge

Cultural change on a national level is undoubtedly the most difficult element of the strategy to achieve. As a minimum, it requires central government leadership and investment in comprehensive social marketing campaigns and the adoption of new behaviours and messages by a range of stakeholders. Notably these include the media, who in this case, are repeat offenders when it comes to reinforcing stereotypes.

The three key steps to achieving culture change are outlined below.

- **Redefining sport: making sport and exercise relevant to girls**
- **Change the beauty ideal**
- **Education: the benefits of an active daily lifestyle**

In each of these areas it is essential also to create role models of fit and healthy women and girls to inspire others to follow their lead.

Redefining sport

Almost 80% of the sports sector surveyed as part of this strategy recognise that “sport” means something different for women than it does for men⁽⁹⁾ and that the word puts around six out of ten women off being physically active. The majority agree that sport needs to be rebranded or redefined before it will appeal to a greater number and variety of women.

“For a long time people have thought that physical activity is all 1980s aerobics and that it’s very high intensity, so you have to re-educate them that there are other activities out there to try that are suitable for them.”

Physical Activity Project Manager,
Local Authority

“The conclusions that current researchers are making are exactly the same as researchers made in the 1970s. Many girls don’t like the kinds of activities that are being offered, they don’t like the kind of kit associated with traditional games, they don’t like the competitive environment of games.”

Nanette Mutrie: Professor of Exercise and Sport Psychology at Strathclyde University Glasgow

Treating women as customers will go a considerable way to redefining sport and is an integral part of this process. However, as *It’s time* showed, attitudes and behaviour have become ingrained from the earliest years, even before school. Starting young is thus essential and girls must equally be considered the customers of the sector. For girls, it is a vital pre-cursor to build the self-esteem necessary to play sport and the confidence to be competitive.

Rebranding sport

- Make sport “cool” for girls at school and at home
- Parents must praise and encourage physically active daughters as much as they do sons
- Fathers – and mothers - should play football and other sports with their daughters as well as their sons
- Schools should make role models of girls that play sport
- Government should fund a publicity campaign that presents physically active girls as aspirational
- As a publicly-funded, public service broadcaster, the BBC should be encouraged to make physically active girls aspirational role models in the programmes that most influence girls, such as TV soaps
- Ensure that female sport stars make it not only on to the back pages of the tabloids, but also into the women’s press
- Expand the range of activities offered in school under the heading of PE or sport to include those favoured by girls and those that they are likely to sustain after school, such as dance, yoga and aerobics, including popular gym classes such as step, boxercise and spinning

- Make non-competitive exercise with friends a route into sport in order to build the self-esteem and confidence to play sport
- Allow girls to wear what makes them feel comfortable and even design their own PE kit
- Create new, more informal and accessible versions of traditional sports for women and girls
- Re-introduce physical literacy to women who were put off sport by PE at school

“Women can’t just rock up at a club and play an hour long netball game with a load of mates and walk away again. The only way they can do that is if they’ve got 13 friends who can hire a court, if there’s a court available... the club structure isn’t set up to be inclusive and we know that often women have domestic responsibilities which mean a regular commitment ...isn’t possible”

Alison Oliver, Youth Sports Trust

“Our culture is such that it’s easy for a group of guys to get together after work and play five-a-side, for example, and it’s easy for them to do that comparatively. Our social system or cultural system doesn’t gear for women to be able to do that and go play netball for example”.

Avril Saunders, Trafford Sport Development

Change the beauty ideal

For women and girls to feel comfortable participating in any form of physical activity, the accepted ideal of beauty must be broadened, so that physically active bodies are considered naturally beautiful. To be successful, this will take considerable multi-stakeholder collaboration and investment in a high profile, multi-media social marketing campaign. The co-operation of the commercial sector is essential, notably from the fashion industry and the media.

Campaign for Real Beauty Dove

Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty seeks to redefine beauty as being real women in their natural state. Advertising presents a range of “real” women of all shapes, sizes and ages defying the media-driven stereotypes of thin-is-beautiful. Other elements of the campaign include:

Billboard: A promotion with ASDA has seen the supermarket’s customers nominate women to appear in Dove advertising.

Via the Dove website:

- Presentational materials
- ‘Beyond Stereotypes’ – a global beauty survey of women
- Inter-active self-esteem builders
- Image manipulation quiz, to show how media images are enhanced to conform to stereotypes

The Dove Self-esteem Fund

- “Created to make a real change in the way women and young girls perceive and embrace beauty. Dove wants to help women free themselves and the next generation from beauty stereotypes”.
- Too many girls develop low self-esteem from hang-ups about looks. Consequently, many fail to reach their full potential later in life. Dove’s fund is an agent of change to educate girls as to a wider definition of beauty.
- The fund fosters positive image-related self-esteem in two areas:

1. Develops and distributes resources that enable women and girls to embrace a broad definition of beauty
2. Provides resources to organisations that foster a broader definition of beauty

Fit for Girls SportsScotland

Between 2005 and 2007, 27 secondary schools in Scotland took part in the Girls in Sport and Physical Activity initiative; a training programme for PE staff and Active Schools Coordinators designed to facilitate new ways of engaging girls and young women in physical activity.

Investment from BIG Lottery Fund and Health Promoting Schools funded a pilot programme and partnership between secondary schools, the Youth Sport Trust and SportsScotland. In the first year of the programme:

- 72% of schools saw an increase in participation in physical activity and sport
- The percentage of girls participating in physical activity and sport rose from 18% to 27%
- Six of the schools have seen girls' participation exceeding or matching boys'.

Education: the benefits of an active daily lifestyle

Further campaigning is also required to make women aware of the benefits of an active lifestyle and to make clear exactly what that comprises. The current guidelines for being sufficiently active need to be reviewed so that they are memorable and usable, and then promoted in targeted social marketing campaigns. The customer-oriented approach contributes to this process, by providing a clear understanding of which benefits are most likely to appeal to women. Alongside this understanding there needs to be easily accessible ways of becoming active.

“We need to spend more time on a one-to-one basis. Where there is evidence of things like...a travel smart programme where they actually spend time with families on an individual basis. That's actually showing really good levels of change in terms of shifting from car use to getting on their bike or walking or public transport. I'd like to see more resources being put into behavioural change programmes that actually show people that yes you can actually make those changes and how to do it and where to go”.

Gladys Barr, Active Swindon PCT

Accommodating activity into busy lifestyles

Evidence and examples of how sport and exercise can be accommodated into busy lives is important, to demonstrate that **“it can be done”**.

MPs Fitness Scheme WSFF

To help prove that work, rest and exercise can run alongside each other, this May, a team of twelve female MPs and MSPs agreed to reshuffle their diaries to take part in the WSFF's three month exercise programme, sponsored by Scottish Widows. Tessa Jowell, Meg Munn, Jo Swinson and Barbara Keeley are some of the women following the tailored plan, including twice weekly one-to-one fitness sessions at their local gyms.

As well as sweating it out, the MPs are noting and feeding back their experiences. It's hoped that the highs and lows of their journey will help deepen the understanding of the issue at a time when the government is conducting a review of its physical activity strategy.

Tessa Jowell, Minister for the Olympics and London: “As with most women my work schedule is hectic. By taking part in the WSFF programme I am hoping to improve my fitness and to prove to myself and other busy women that regular exercise can be incorporated into our lives. With London 2012 on the horizon it is the perfect time to encourage women to enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle”

Role models

Inspirational and aspirational role models need to be created, identified and enlisted to support each element of campaigning and to show women and girls that being fit and healthy is realistic, beneficial and above all, attractive. It would undeniably be advantageous to influence men and boys to find fit and healthy women and girls attractive too!

In using role models, it is important to recognise which people will have greatest positive impact. Those working in the sport sector were asked to rank the types of role model they considered to be most influential on both active and inactive women.

What types of role models are the most important?^(a)

	For women not currently active	For women currently active
% very important		
Successful sportswomen	28%	54%
Role models in the local community	50%	35%
Celebrity role models who maintain an active lifestyle (non-sport)	36%	22%

Base: All online survey respondents (367)

Policy direction

Develop policies to improve leadership, investment and profile

Policy-makers must co-ordinate policies, commit to increase female leadership, distribute funding equally and invest in promoting women's sport and fitness and persuade others to do the same.

Policy leadership: sport and physical activity

Latest government policy has divided responsibility for sport and for physical activity. DCMS, through Sport England, is now responsible for sport alone however it is unclear as to where responsibility to increase physical activity now lies. A coherent policy for physical activity is essential, with the Department of Health (DH) the logical owner.

Critically, DH and its agencies will need to invest in understanding the women's market, adopting the customer-oriented approach advocated, just as DCMS is beginning to understand the reasons behind women's lower levels of participation in sport and how to address them.

Sport and physical activity should remain closely aligned, as exercise is a key route into sport and success in sport is often dependent on exercise and the provision of facilities to support general training.

Leadership

The low levels of women in senior positions in sport urgently requires addressing, in order to facilitate a greater understanding at a senior level of women's needs and to create role models in the sector. Employment otherwise in sport is split equally between men and women. Guidance for policy-makers in sport from other industries shows that a 30% representation of women in senior management positions is required to effect a shift in approach and culture. The Women and Leadership Development Programme run by UK Sport is a good example of what can work, but is small scale and needs to be replicated.

Investment

According to consultation with the sports sector, the single most important thing that would increase women's participation is ring-fenced or targeted funding dedicated to women's sport.^(a)

Public funding

On the basis of population figures alone, it is arguable that 51% of public funding should be devoted to women's sport and physical activity. At the very least, sports councils and NGBs should be able to account for how public funding is being spent and who benefits. Currently, the only measure is that money distributed by Sport England to NGBs is spent at a ratio of 64:36 in favour of men, as this is the proportion of men playing the sports represented by the NGBs that receive Sport England funding.

Encouragingly, Sport England's new strategy promises that NGBs will be held to account in their provision for women's sport:

“for NGBs, developing the girls' and women's game is not an optional extra, but a vital part of what they will be required to do. If any sport does not accept this challenge, funding will be switched to those that do”.

Private funding

There is presently very little private sponsorship of women's sport. Scottish Widows' investment in the WSFF is a notable exception. Not only do women and girls represent exceptional untapped commercial potential, but the 2012 Games and the increased focus on women's physical activity will make sport, and women's sport in particular, a new frontier for corporate social responsibility.

Profile

Behind the desire from the sports sector for ring-fenced funding, a centrally co-ordinated campaign to promote women's sport, capable of individualisation for specific sports, is considered the second most important initiative to increase women's participation.^(a) It is recommended that sport as a sector should use this as an opportunity to combine resources to fund a generic campaign, which individual sports can then adapt to their needs nationally and locally.

Government and sport should jointly exert pressure on the media to increase coverage of women's sport. Moreover, it is anticipated that the adoption of this strategy will increase the number of women playing, involved and interested in sport, which should result in the media recognising a potentially new revenue stream and thus identifying a vested interest in better representing women's sport.

Title IX

Education Amendments of 1972

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance".

Although mentioned nowhere in the legislation, Title IX has been used primarily to increase funding to women's high school and collegiate athletics. Subsequently, in 1979, a policy interpretation was issued, to provide the "three-pronged" compliance test for institutions, which had to meet one of the three provisions.

Prong one - Providing athletic opportunities that are substantially proportionate to the student enrollment, OR

Prong two - Demonstrate a continual expansion of athletic opportunities for the underrepresented sex, OR

Prong three - Full and effective accommodation of the interest and ability of underrepresented sex.

Legislation

The primary value of legislation in this area comes from understanding how it can be used constructively to drive progress. Despite the controversy surrounding Title IX in America, the legislation has been used successfully to direct increased funding into women's sport. Here, the Gender Equality Duty and recently-announced Equality Bill present similar opportunities.

Gender Equality Duty

To date, there has been little use of the Gender Equality Duty, which obliges public bodies to make specific provision for women and leaves them liable initially to complaint and censure and ultimately to potential litigation if they fail to meet their obligations:

- Gather information on how their work affects women and men
- Consult all stakeholders
- Assess impact of policies and practices on both sexes
- Prioritise and set gender equality objectives
- Plan and take action to achieve objectives
- Publish a gender equality scheme
- Review progress every three years

Unfortunately, there is no clear definition in the legislation to facilitate its consistent application to the variety of public bodies in sport. In the absence of this, it is in the interests of all public bodies in sport to make it a matter of policy to treat the Equality Duty as a mandatory standard, as all stand to benefit from women's increased participation for which the Duty provides clear and constructive guidelines.

Equality Bill

It is understood that the recently announced Equality Bill will consolidate all discrimination legislation. Of its provisions, the opportunity to positively discriminate in favour of employing women, should all other circumstances be equal and the employer can specifically demonstrate the value of appointing a woman, would appear to offer considerable value to the sports sector, where female leadership is lacking.

Commission on the Future of Women's Sport

The most encouraging development in the area of policy for women's sport is the creation of the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport to be chaired by Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE. Conceived and managed by the WSFF, the Commission, launched by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, comprises senior representatives from Government, politics, sport, business, academia and media. It will examine the status and recommend policies on the three key areas of policy for women's sport: leadership, investment and profile.



Defining the audience

5

Defining the audience

5.1 Who to target and how to reach them

In using the strategic imperatives to design and deliver sport and physical activity successfully, the framework should not be applied to women indiscriminately as a single collective. This strategy recommends targeting specific groups of women to realise the greatest return on investment and resource.

Women's motivations and expectations in relation to physical activity are different to men's. However, there are also considerable differences in participation levels and motivations between different types of women. Understanding the differences that exist between women is essential to successfully designing and promoting activities that meet their expectations.

Different approaches to targeting can be used to focus on individual behaviour or to accelerate cultural change. Resources might be targeted at particular types of women at those points in their lives when they are most receptive to undertaking or increasing physical activity. By successfully targeting those women who are most likely to be active and to act as role models to influence others, more women will become more active more quickly, fostering a culture of greater acceptance and expectation of female participation.

There are various ways in which women can be grouped, or segmented.

Segmentation model Sport England

Sport England has recognised that women are not all the same and has created a segmentation model that identifies 19 groups (of which 11 are made up of or include women) according to key life-stage and lifestyle identifiers such as age, affluence, marital status and parental obligations. These help to explain individuals' motivations, attitudes, behaviour and barriers towards sport and active recreation.

Each segment has been described within the context of sporting activities and levels of participation, which vary enormously between the different groups. An additional understanding of attitudes, socio-demographics, health statistics and marketing communication preferences has developed a fully-rounded picture of each segment.

Additional investment in further research will be required to supplement the existing insight. Some efforts have begun to be made to use demographic segmentation to design specific services and communication plans.

One of the 19 segmented groups is known as "Leanne". Described as a 'supportive single', she makes up 9.1% of women, or 4.7% of the total population. Leanne, who may be a young busy mum or perhaps one of her supportive college mates, is unlikely to be a member of a club. If she does exercise it is likely to be an exercise class or swimming with her friends.

Leanne's motivations will be to lose weight or to catch up with friends and successful communications to persuade her to be active should focus on fun and entertainment. She is most influenced by friends and family.

Life phases

In addition to understanding the differences between women by demographics, it's also important to consider when they are likely to be most receptive to change. In consultation, 59% of stakeholders gave highest priority to targeting women who do not currently participate in any physical activity, but who are motivated to do so^(a). Often this can be when they experience transitions in their lives, for example leaving school, getting married, having a child or divorce.

These "life phases" or "life shocks" are often times when women are more receptive to change, because they have a sudden change in motivation or interest, such as deciding to lose weight.

Sometimes, critical changes in a woman's status and circumstances can provide the catalyst for change and predispose a woman to alter multiple aspects of her lifestyle.

These 'life shocks' can appear at any time of life and some examples where women may be open to change and motivated to do new things are included below. These motivations can span the age groups and provide opportunities to reach out to and engage a greater number of women. They also provide opportunities for sport and fitness to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations that are already leaders in these areas, such as slimming organisations, wedding planners or suppliers, financial advisers and insurance companies.

87% of stakeholders believe this is an effective way to segment women, with more than half (55%) identifying leaving school as the most important life shock on which to focus, due to the high "drop off" rate in physical activity at this point in young women's lives.^(a)

"There needs to be a greater understanding of the 'lifelong participation model' in terms of those transitional periods and recognition that there are points where people are more likely to drop it or pick it up. We need to target provision to what girls and women want in terms of participation at those different life stages"

Development Manager, sports council

Life shock	Attitude/opportunity	Route/message
Leaving school	Liberation, maintaining friendships	Schools, online social networking
Starting further/higher education	Leaving home, independence, transition, friends, indulgence	Colleges and universities, online social networking
Starting work	Independence, affluence, control	Employer's induction
Getting married	New life	Wedding magazines and planners
Moving to a new area	Fresh start, integration, new friends	Estate agents
Pre and post natal	Health in mind	Midwives, health visitors, GPs
Starting a diet or joining a diet group	Committed to change	Diet organisations: calories out to balance calories in
Changing job or career	Open to experimentation, making an impression	Employer's induction
Separation or divorce	Ready to reinvent	Solicitors
Retirement	Leisure time, health in old age	Financial planners, holiday companies
Becoming widowed	Ready to reinvent	Bereavement counselling

Engaging older people FISHNETS

Northumberland's FISHNETS (Fit, Involved, Safe, Healthy, Networks) aims to support the independent living of older people in the community and promote healthy and active ageing.

Physical activity programmes have been developed to provide a range of activities for individuals with different levels of physical ability and needs. These include falls prevention and routines that are supported through Community Chest (e.g. chair based exercise courses in sheltered housing and Tai Chi).

The predominantly female participants said that their participation had a positive impact on their quality of life. Physical changes led to improvement in confidence to undertake daily activities such as making their own bed, getting washed and dressed and hanging the washing on the line.

Increased confidence to undertake these activities extended to having the confidence to fulfil and achieve personal goals such as re-engaging with social/interest pursuits.

"My goal was to be able to get out to the shops...and now I do shopping and I have been to Newcastle....So yes I have achieved what I wanted to do."

64 older people have been trained as EXTEND trainers and deliver sessions throughout the whole county.

Young mums Southampton City Council

Several young mums groups were already in existence, but none yet focused on healthy lifestyles and physical fitness. A workshop was devised which covered many areas including creating a balanced diet and completing gentle exercises. Aimed at 18 - 25 year olds, a key aim was to give these new mums the opportunity to try out basic exercises in a non-competitive environment.

As funding has been found to pay for a coach, the workshop sessions are free and the leisure centre was able to offer a half-price offer on inductions, a substantial discount for the mums compared to many fitness clubs and gyms in the city. A package is currently being put together to offer further reductions in crèche and gym usage in the future.

Achieving momentum: targeting the trailblazers

Instigating cultural change across all groups more broadly can be achieved by identifying and initially targeting those most likely to influence others to follow their lead. This is similar to the process used by technology companies, which seek to identify and target the "innovators" and "early adopters" of new technologies and technology products, who set the trends as aspirational role models for the remainder ("early majority", "late majority" and "laggards") to follow.

Applying this approach to women and girls, key influential groups would include:

Cool girls at school

- those that others look up to and seek to imitate

Those already involved in sport and exercise to "bring-a-friend"

- charity runners
- workplaces

Those who care about the consequences

- the so-called "Generation X": concerned mothers who wish to set a role model for their daughters to counter the beauty obsessed culture

Professional women

- shown by *It's time* to be one of the most active groups, despite lack of time, due to education and affluence

A national campaign to promote the ideal that active is attractive should be leveraged, using these trail blazing advocates as its leaders.

Measuring success



Measuring success

For the range of desired policies, initiatives and interventions required to increase and sustain women's physical activity to have any meaning, each must be measured and evaluated. Given the wide range of organisations responsible for increasing participation, a myriad of targets and measures will likely be created.

Given the parlous state of female physical activity, it is of paramount importance to successfully focus the sector on working together to achieve the most important ultimate outcomes from the combination of total activity. To do this, certain key principles should be agreed.

Specific targets for women

As the majority of the population, facing the greatest challenge, with the cost of failure and prize of success representing the most extensive national impact, national targets should be set specifically for women's participation in physical activity. The Government's target to get two million more people more active by 2012 should specify that at least 51% of these should be women, arguably more, in order to address the imbalance between male and female activity.

Focus on outcomes

While it is important to measure organisational delivery (inputs and outputs) and the immediate and identifiable consequences of activity (impacts), it is most valuable at a national level to measure the high level outcomes that indicate effective success and focus the industry collectively on prioritising time and resource.

Ownership

Targets set need to be agreed, owned and published regularly. Organisations and individuals should be held accountable for meeting them and treat the targets as part of their own performance assessment.

Simple, clear and constructive

All targets at a high level should be simple, clearly and readily understood and capable of practical measurement. Measurement of targets must also be valuable in indicating where to refine strategies and plans, if necessary and to help to improve performance.

Investment

Sufficient investment must be dedicated to measuring success to a high standard. Failure to invest in this area risks wasting much of the considerable funding in women's sport and fitness that this strategy is advocating.

Progress to date

The WSFF is currently developing a comprehensive set of regular measures to evaluate its own performance and the success of the industry in achieving the outcomes required for women and girls. This research programme could potentially serve the sector as a whole.

6.1 Identifying measures and setting targets

The complexity of the issues, the number of potential segmentation models and the range of organisations involved in setting policy, investing funds and providing sport and exercise mean that a range of targets need to be set at individual and organisational levels, as well as at a national level. Targets will, of course, be dependent on the range of actions agreed and undertaken to increase participation and the levels of investment provided. Initially and ideally, collective agreement should be reached among key stakeholders as to the range of measures to be adopted. However, certain outcomes must be measured to encourage action.

The WSFF is constructing a comprehensive research programme that will measure the key outcomes in relation to women's physical activity. This is based on the components of the vision of a nation of active women. Its key measures are likely to include:

Overall activity levels

- As a minimum one million more women should be more physically active by 2012
- Ideally the majority of women would be doing enough physical activity to benefit their health (a reverse of the current 20:80 statistic)
- Targets for key groups should be set, such as reducing girls' drop-out rates

Awareness among women to be active

- Success of investment in campaigning and education will be evaluated by measuring women's awareness of the need and reasons to be active

Attitudes of women and girls

- Using a customer-oriented approach to understand women's motivations and expectations in relation to sport, fitness and its provision, facilitates the measurement of attitudes, opinions and satisfaction over time, providing invaluable feedback to the sector

Quality of sports provision

- The success of adopting a customer-oriented approach to provision will be evaluated by measuring the quality and improvement of sport and fitness delivery for women and girls, the number and location of places to participate (e.g. schools, workplaces) and the provision for key groups, such as families and those over 55

Levels of public and commercial investment

- Consultation suggests a 51:49 level of public funding for men's and women's sport should be set and monitored
- Women should be paid as professionals to play team sports
- A clear tool for determining how much investment (public and private) has gone into women's sport must be developed

Leadership and employment in sport

- The number of women at Board level, in senior management and decision-making roles will be measured, together with the number of women coaches, officials and volunteers

Industry commitment to increase women's participation

- The degree of gender awareness, understanding and commitment to increasing women's participation in sport and fitness will be monitored
- NGBs and other partners, particularly those receiving public funding, should be able to evidence a clear strategy and commitment to increase women's participation

Active women celebrated and admired

- The key measure of cultural change and the need to make active attractive

Media profile

- Media profile for women's sport should be increased dramatically from the current levels.
- The promotion of fit and healthy role models in non-sports and new media should be measured

6.2 Measurement, evaluation and reporting

The WSFF is assessing a series of existing research studies to ascertain what is already being measured, in order to compile and re-present this as the focused and authoritative assessment of women's participation and to identify where new research needs to be undertaken. The reporting cycle will vary according to what is being measured.

Existing research

Active People

Sport England's Active People survey is the industry-recognised study of the number and gender of people being active and the activities in which they participate. Sport England has also committed to a clear set of measurable achievements to pursue and deliver a quantifiable increase in satisfaction. The existing satisfaction baseline from Active People provides information about the provision of sport in an area. A new baseline will be developed in the first half of 2008-09 which will ascertain participants' satisfaction with the quality of their experience.

Women in Sport Audit

The WSFF's annual overview of women in the sports sector currently looks at leadership, investment and profile in sport only. Extensions to this study and potential new research are being considered to incorporate more specific evaluation of NGBs, the quality of service delivery, levels of local authority investment and the fitness sector.

New research

It's time

Subject to funding, the WSFF anticipates conducting a regular version of the groundbreaking industry benchmark study, *It's time*, to provide a comprehensive state-of-the-nation report, encompassing participation, awareness, attitudinal change, body image and the cultural portrayal of women. Given the time taken to change attitudes and behaviour, particularly through social marketing and subject to the need to secure funding or sponsorship, it is anticipated to repeat this study every three years.

Ad hoc studies

As part of its role as the national experts in women's physical activity and to support its campaigning, the WSFF will, subject to attracting the necessary funding, undertake a series of ad hoc, topical studies covering a range of areas and types of research. These may include specific target groups, such as school leavers, mothers and daughters, baby boomers and low income, black and ethnic minority women. These may also cover participation, attitudes and awareness; and will include different types of research such as ethnography, to study culture and behaviour and the change in cultural processes over time.



Call-to-action



Call-to-action

Increasing women's physical activity is integral to the health and well-being of the nation. As an important national issue, the onus rests with central Government to take the lead in developing policies, providing investment and resource and setting expectations for others.

However, stakeholders were clear in research that the vision will not be realised by progress in just a single sector or through the actions of one organisation alone. A nation of active women will only be created if all the stakeholders with the power and responsibility to effect change engage in the issue, jointly take ownership of the problem and its solutions and collectively provide leadership both in their own sectors and for society as a whole.

The WSFF has produced this strategy in consultation with a range of stakeholders. Different elements of the strategy will be relevant to different audiences. However, it is designed to provide a consistent and unifying direction for all to follow, working together in partnership to achieve the same goals.

This is an explicit invitation for all stakeholders to work directly with the WSFF to create detailed, individual plans to create a nation of active women.



Technical appendix

Technical Appendix

Creating a Nation of Active Women is a strategy informed by existing market insight, new research, extensive consultation and an analysis of how environments that do appeal to women succeed, comprising:

Ipsos MORI Consultation Methodology

Establishing and running the working group

A strategy working group was established, made up of representatives of the key policy areas which will be involved in driving participation in future. The WSFF drew up a list of potential attendees and contacted them using an invitation prepared on its behalf by Ipsos MORI. An inaugural consultation session took place on 6th March 2008 to discuss initial proposals for the strategy. A second session took place on 20th May following the online survey allowing the project team to feedback findings from the survey and to explore and progress the views of the working group. In addition, all representatives were encouraged to share their views throughout the wider consultation process.

Stakeholder depth interviews

This element of the project was designed to explore the range of issues and priorities affecting women and girls' participation as well as to test early ideas for the strategy with a variety of practitioners and policy-makers.

The WSFF provided a sample of 87 potential interviewees who were sent an email inviting them to participate in either a telephone or face-to-face depth interview. Following the recruitment email (sent by the WSFF), all potential participants were re-contacted via telephone by Ipsos MORI, who then arranged and conducted a total of 29 telephone or face-to-face interviews between 26th March and 12th May.

Each interview lasted around 40 minutes and with the permission of the respondent, were digitally recorded. The interviews were designed to gauge participants' attitudes towards and experiences of increasing women's participation in sport and physical activities. Notes from these interviews (including verbatim quotes and case study information) were compiled by Ipsos MORI. At the end of the interview process Ipsos MORI also provided a short report highlighting key themes and issues.

Strategic Planning Workshop

The workshop was designed to target a series of stakeholders identified by the WSFF - Government (key ministers and contacts), NGOs, sports deliverers and Sport England regional offices - to test their reaction to the proposed vision and goals. Inviting key government representatives ensured the involvement of other sectors, outside of sport, in a more detailed examination of the potential strategy direction and content.

A WSFF sourced sample of key stakeholders were invited via email to attend a strategic planning workshop. All contacts were re-contacted by Ipsos MORI by telephone and by email, inviting them to attend the half day event, which was hosted in the WSFF's offices in London on 1st May. A total of 21 stakeholders attended the workshop event.

The workshop involved a series of presentations led by the WSFF, Genesis and Ipsos MORI, followed by break out discussion groups with the workshop participants.

Online stakeholder survey

The purpose of this stage was to carry out a programme of stakeholder consultation in order to inform the strategy content in more detail and to ensure that it will be owned by and adopted from Government to grass-roots. The survey aimed to reach out to a wide variety of people and not just those working with women and girls.

An online questionnaire of around 35 questions (including a number of open ended questions) was designed by Ipsos MORI in partnership with the WSFF according to their research objectives. The questionnaire asked respondents for their opinion about some of the strategy ideas, including its vision and goals, but also about potential next steps and recommendations. It also provided another opportunity to probe into what other types of supporting materials may be welcomed by people further down the delivery chain, i.e. what would be useful in any developed guidance notes.

A WSFF supplied sample of 1,364 people, were sent an email invitation, asking them to take part in the online survey. A link to the online survey was contained with the invitation email. Fieldwork took place between 19th May and 1st of June 2008. Halfway through fieldwork a reminder email was sent to all potential respondents who had not already completed the survey. A total of 367 responses were completed, representing a response rate of 27%. Following completion of the survey, Ipsos MORI provided the WSFF with a topline document, indicating the general findings of the survey. This was later supplemented with a full set of tables with more detailed analysis of the results.

Analysis of existing published research, including:

The WSFF/Future Foundation's *It's time*, including the contributory consumer research on attitudes to sport and exercise.

Henley Centre Headlight Vision (HCHV) segmented consumer research commissioned by Sport England, published in 2008.

Sport England's Active People survey (this report refers to 2005/2006 data).

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^(a) Online stakeholder survey, Ipsos MORI, May 2008

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