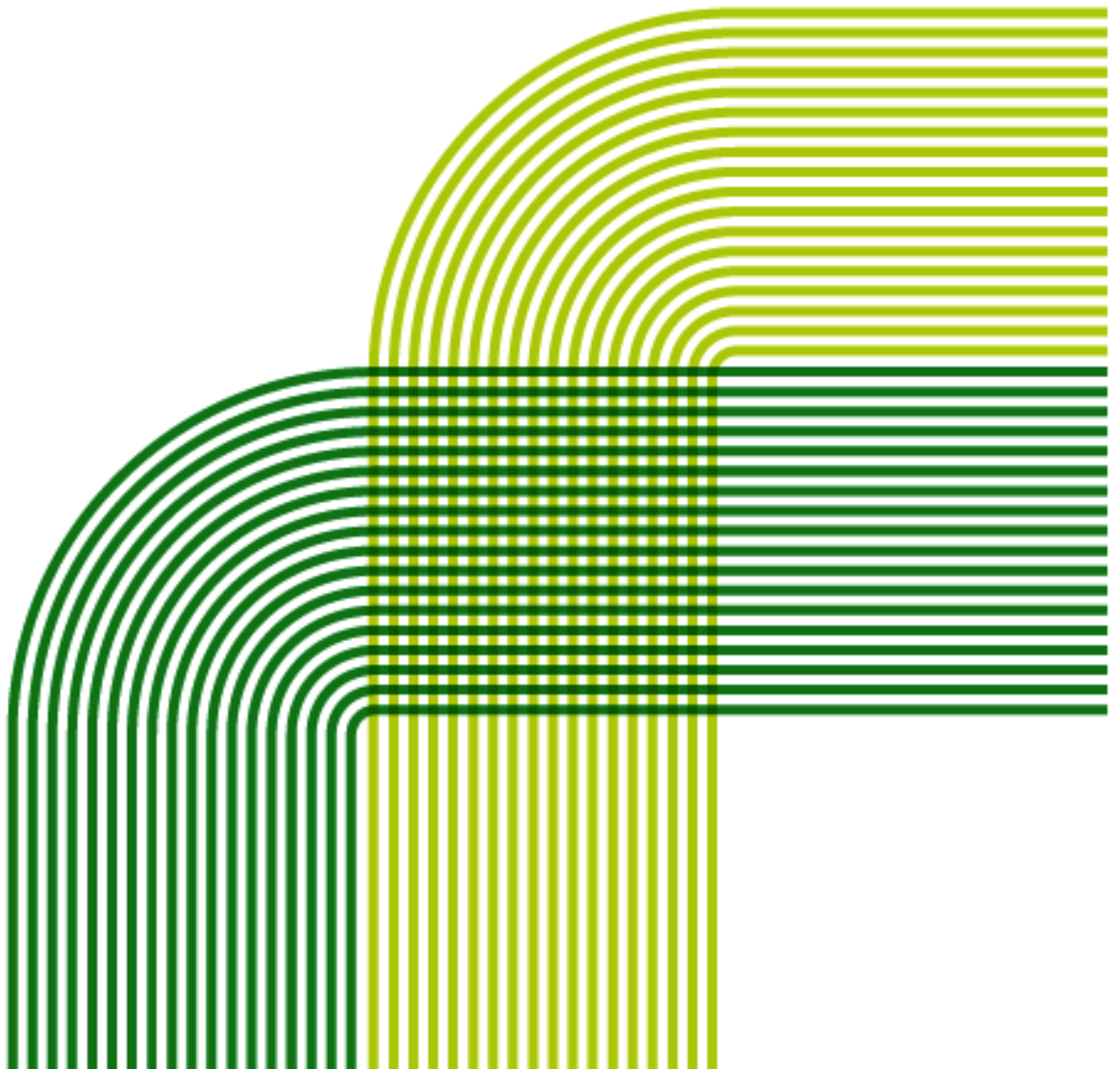




**IFF Research**

# Evaluation of the Active Women Programme – Interim Report

Prepared for Sport England  
By IFF Research





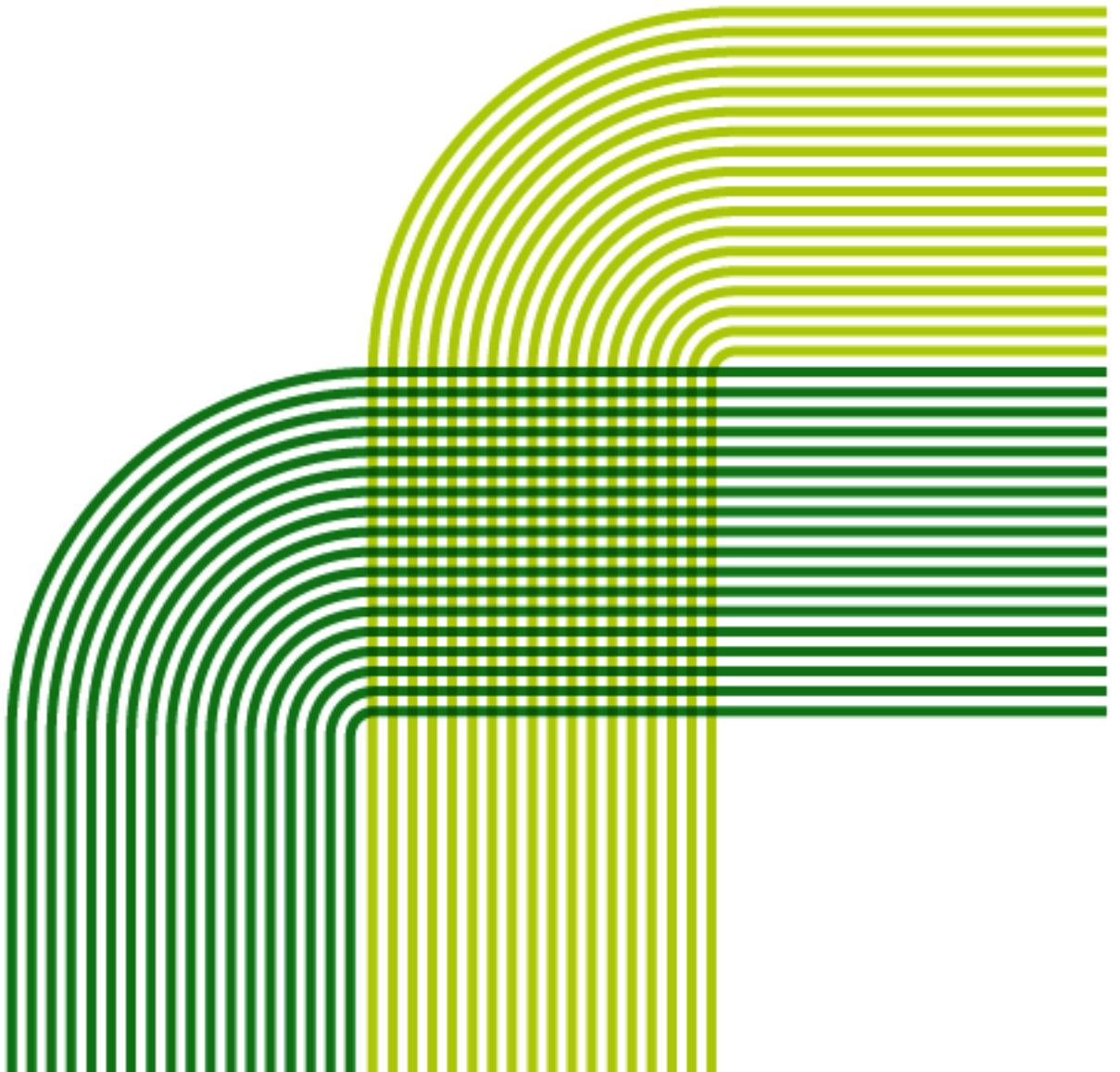
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# 1 Executive Summary

## Introduction

- 1.1 Women currently take part in less sport than men and despite intensive efforts to address this (with even greater impetus provided by the wish to leverage a participation legacy from the hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games) participation levels among women remain stubbornly flat.
- 1.2 Sport England's Active Women programme seeks to overcome this by contributing £10m of National Lottery Funding to support projects as they grow and sustain female participation in grassroots sport. Active Women projects are intended to increase the number of women playing sport and to encourage women who already play some sport to take part more often.
- 1.3 To be eligible for Active Women funding, applicants had to demonstrate that projects would address the specific barriers to participation in sport faced by either:
  - Women in disadvantaged communities (the 20% most deprived lower super output areas in the country); or
  - Women caring for children under the age of 16.
- 1.4 In January 2011, the 20 projects awarded Active Women funding were announced, and these can be found in the appendix.

## Methodology

- 1.5 The evaluation involved speaking to both projects and participants.
- 1.6 First, an initial face-to-face interview was carried out with project leads from each of the 20 projects. Following this, six projects were selected to be explored in greater detail: site visits were conducted at each, consisting of a researcher visiting the projects and conducting three to six in-depth interviews with the project lead, coaches and volunteers.
- 1.7 Interviews were then carried out with participants from each of the six projects selected. Some interviews were quantitative, conducted online and by telephone, and were approximately 15 minutes long (989 conducted), while others were more in-depth, face-to-face interviews and lasted up to an hour (30 conducted, five from each project).
- 1.8 This report presents the main findings from these Year One interviews.

## Analysis of Management Information

- 1.9 The Active Women projects report against a set of standard indicators developed by Sport England. These reported figures show the extent to which projects are meeting targets (discussed below), and so provide information on where projects may be facing challenges, or seeing particular successes, at least in terms of the numbers of women involved.
- 1.10 The core output measures are 'participants' (the total number of women who take part in sport at a project at least once) and 'throughput' (the count of the total number of 'attendances').
- 1.11 Targets for these measures were included in the initial funding bids submitted by Active Women projects and subsequently agreed between each Active Women project and Sport England by the outset of the Programme.



- 1.12 Of the 17 projects which have completed a year of delivery and reported their Year One participant figures, the overall projected Year One target was 28,325, while the actual total achieved was 27,944. This confirms that, on the whole, projects were on track with their delivery, at least in terms of participation.
- 1.13 While projects were generally on track with their participant numbers, they somewhat struggled to achieve their throughput figures, a sign that projects were experiencing retention issues and finding it difficult to encourage frequent turnout at sessions. Nine projects reported their Year One throughput figures and while the total target for these nine projects was 79,429, the number achieved was 33,658, 42% of the target.
- 1.14 A key aim of the Active Women projects is to address specific barriers to participation in sport faced by women in deprived areas or women caring for children under the age of 16. Initial evidence from the management information would suggest that projects have been struggling on both these fronts:
- The overall target across the 15 projects reporting Year One figures on women living in deprived areas was 7,894. The achieved figure was 4,554, 57% of the target.
  - Of the 11 projects reporting on women caring for children under 16, the overall target was 6,406. The achieved figure was 4,147, 65% of the target.

#### Delivering the Active Women projects

- 1.15 Overall, projects appear to be coping well with the challenges they face implementing the Active Women Programme, though several mention teething problems.
- 1.16 Project leads and other staff and volunteers appear to work together well, keeping lines of communication open and supporting each other. Some staff members feel still greater communication could improve things e.g. with coaches being more aware of other coaches' classes, as well as more involved in the overall 'direction' of the project.
- 1.17 Those involved in the project tend to report this being a positive experience, though the (for some, unexpected) administrative burden involved in delivery can be a struggle.
- 1.18 The quality of coaches, and therefore the quality of their training, is all-important. A quality assessment could ensure coaches have reached a suitable standard. Engaging and retaining coaches and volunteers (and therefore keeping 'familiar faces' for participants) is also important.
- 1.19 Partnership working has been very beneficial for some projects, providing resources such as equipment and venues, as well as expertise in the form of additional coaches, and excellent opportunities for marketing to (particularly) hard-to-reach women. Generally partnership working is successful, but in some cases relationships have become fraught or competitive.
- 1.20 Many projects have deviated to a small extent from the original model put forward in the bid to Sport England, with smaller numbers deviating more. Generally changes were made to sessions to better accommodate participants, with smaller numbers having made more substantial changes e.g. to their budget structure or initial participant target figures.
- 1.21 Projects are anxious to take steps in order to be sustainable so that women can continue to benefit from the Active Women Programme after funding from Sport England stops. Generally, projects are looking to try and maintain provision of venues and coaches where possible, by ensuring they are paid for elsewhere where possible, such as by the local authority. Another step is to maintain and strengthen the existing links and relationships with participants and partners, as well as 'future-



proofing' the project by communicating with current participants to find out what they will want going forward.

### Recruitment to the Active Women programme

- 1.22 One of the major themes of this evaluation is the ability of projects to recruit women to activity sessions for the first time, particularly those women in the target groups who are often 'hard-to-reach' with regards to sport.
- 1.23 As reported, at an overall level projects are managing to hit target numbers in terms of participants recruited, though this varies widely between projects, with some considerably exceeding their targets and some falling short. In addition, meeting targets for women in disadvantaged areas and those caring for children is proving challenging for many.
- 1.24 The key to successful recruitment is to address the concerns and motivators that prevent and encourage women to attend sessions like these.
- 1.25 Most women find out about the Active Women programme through a friend's recommendation, and decide then to attend sessions for a number of reasons, including (particularly) their friend's recommendation, low cost of sessions, low commitment, convenient venue location and convenient session times.
- 1.26 While some women have no qualms about attending a session for the first time, even on their own, these women are likely to be the minority, particularly among those falling into the groups specifically targeted by the project – those living in disadvantaged areas, and those caring for children.
- 1.27 Women are often initially concerned that they will not be very good at the sport or will not remember the rules from when they were younger. Some were concerned that their level of fitness would be below others in the group. Others were particularly self-conscious about their weight, and so sometimes also about wearing sports clothes (particularly swimming costumes) in front of others.
- 1.28 Recruitment therefore should take account of both the motivating factors, and the barriers. To this end, projects have found the following to be particularly effective:
  - Face-to-face recruitment wherever possible at public launch events, where women can meet coaches as well as participants, and see example activity sessions in action
  - Personal follow-up contact from coaches following any public events
  - Overtly encouraging existing participants to 'bring a friend'
  - Wide promotion throughout the whole community in areas women are likely to be (not just leisure centres) using a variety of media (posters / leaflets / social media)
  - Form links with various partnership organisations within the community in order to engage women from a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, lifestyles and religions
  - Providing easy-to-access practical information about what sessions will entail
  - Mythbusting, including preconceptions that you have to be 'in shape' to enjoy sport; and reassuring prospective participants that most others will also be beginners





### Retention of women on the Active Women programme

- 1.29 Another main theme of the evaluation is the extent to which projects are managing to retain participants longer term, after women have taken the all-important step of attending a session for the first time.
- 1.30 Projects are achieving varying levels of success in retaining participants. Overall, a slight majority of participants surveyed were still attending Active Women sessions at the time they completed the survey. However, across projects there were women who considered themselves to still be attending even though they had not attended in the last three months, and significant minorities who had stopped attending sessions.
- 1.31 Crucial to successfully retaining participants is addressing both *enablers* and *encouragers* of attendance.
- *'Enablers'* include convenient session times, accessible venue locations, childcare facilities, flexible drop-in sessions and affordable prices. These minimise potential barriers to attendance, making it feasible for women to attend in the first place, and on a frequent basis.
  - *'Encouragers'* include frequent contact from project staff, social oriented, fun and non-competitive sessions, competent coaches and incentives. These can be used alongside enablers to persuade women to keep attending.
- 1.32 In terms of enablers, the following have been particularly effective and should be utilised by all projects as they move forward:
- Running morning sessions to meet the needs of women with child caring responsibilities
  - Monitoring the popularity of session times so timings can be adjusted to better meet women's needs
  - Offering childcare facilities in partnership with other local organisations
  - Choosing venues that are within walking distance and / or offering a project-run bus service, to and from venues
- 1.33 The following encouragers have also been used with success, and should be considered by all projects as possible tools for retaining participants:
- Regular email updates from project staff
  - Follow-up contact and updates from project staff to women who have left a project
  - Sessions designed as social events
  - Induction training for coaches
- 1.34 Training for coaches in both 'hard' and 'soft' skills is an area that needs particular consideration across projects. Incentives, for both participants and volunteers, should also be considered as so far these have been overlooked by some projects as a tool for retaining women.

### Impact of the Active Women Programme: Early Findings

- 1.35 Although the second and third years of the Active Women Programme will provide the main tools for assessing impact and sustainability of behaviour change, findings from the Year One quantitative participant survey did produce some early indications of (short term) impacts.





- 1.36 Six in ten (61%) women had done more sport in the previous month than they had done before their involvement with an Active Women project (**short term impact**).
- 26% had done no sport before Active Women but had done so in month prior to interview.
  - 35% had done sport before Active Women and increased the frequency of activity since.
- 1.37 Nearly one in three (28%) women felt that they would not have done any sport without Active Women, while a further half (48%) would have done less sport (**net impact**).
- 1.38 Women from the target groups (deprived and / or with childcare responsibilities) were no more likely to have increased their overall activity levels since their involvement with Active Women (short-term impact) but they were less likely to think that the increase in their levels of sporting activity would have happened anyway (i.e. they were more likely to attribute their participation in sport directly to the Active Women Programme).
- 1.39 Around one in ten (9%) women were already doing some sort of sporting activity at least three times a week prior to joining Active Women and were not in one of the target groups, indicating a relatively low proportion of participants with fewer barriers to sport accessing and benefitting from Active Women (**leakage**).
- 1.40 Over four in five (84%) women had recommended their project or spoken about enjoying the sessions to someone else while nearly three in five (57%) had brought a friend or family member along to a session (**multiplier effects**).
- 1.41 Participants were very positive about the **softer impacts** of their Active Women sessions: nearly all (98%) had fun, while 89% felt fitter and 88% felt better about themselves.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1.42 Overall, the conclusions are positive. There is evidence of a great deal of effort and dedication on the part of project staff and volunteers, and a culture of creativity on a generally tight budget.
- 1.43 Where projects do reach women in the target groups, the positive impact of the Programme can be enormous. However, reaching women in the target groups has been a challenge for most projects, as has encouraging women (whether target or not) to keep attending sessions regularly.
- 1.44 In terms of overall participant numbers, projects seem to have met their Year One targets, though meeting the higher targets at Year Two and Year Three with a similar level of funding and resource could be a challenge.
- 1.45 The idea of flexibility is an important one; several projects would appreciate the opportunity to change their offering in response to local women's needs, rather than being constrained by what was proposed in their original bid. It would be of great benefit to projects to be considered as Learning Organisations that will need to change and adapt to best meet the needs of target women.
- 1.46 The provision of childcare has been mixed, with many projects reporting it is too expensive to be sustainable, particularly when demand cannot be guaranteed. Greater support around the issue of childcare, or suggestions from Sport England about partnership working with organisations such as children's charities or children's centres, could be beneficial going forward.



- 1.47 Personal, in-community, face-to-face contact from enthusiastic project staff and participants is key to increasing awareness of the different projects and increasing recruitment, though this kind of contact is especially resource intensive, and projects could look to use volunteers here wherever possible.
- 1.48 Another main theme that came out of the research was the importance of high quality coaching, with the soft skills and personality of coaches being one of the keys to retaining participants. Some projects mentioned difficulties in terms of the journey involved in recruiting local women, particularly in these groups, to undergo training in order to become volunteer coaches and then paid coaches.
- 1.49 There is evidence of projects being innovative when it comes to forming links with other organisations, and substantial groundwork being laid for the future. An emphasis on this over the coming years could increase projects' ability to be sustainable after the cessation of funding.
- 1.50 There was some mention among project staff of the unexpected administrative burden of running the project, and greater support or resource going forward could be helpful.
- 1.51 While there is evidence of some teething problems, projects are demonstrating an understanding for the need for innovation, and have a genuine passion for increasing sporting activity among women.



## 2 Introduction

### About the Active Women Programme

- 2.1 Women currently take part in less sport than men and despite intensive efforts to address this (with even greater impetus provided by the wish to leverage a participation legacy from the hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games) participation levels among women remain stubbornly flat.
- 2.2 Sport England's Active Women Programme seeks to overcome this by contributing £10m of National Lottery Funding to support projects as they grow and sustain female participation in grassroots sport. Active Women projects are intended to increase the number of women playing sport and to encourage women who already play some sport to take part more often. To sustain behaviour change, it will also be important for projects to offer appropriate exit routes for participants so that they can continue to play sport even after the activity supported by Active Women funding has ended.
- 2.3 To be eligible for Active Women funding, applicants had to demonstrate that projects would address the specific barriers to participation in sport faced by either:
  - Women in disadvantaged communities (the 20% most deprived lower super output areas in the country); or
  - Women caring for children under the age of 16.
- 2.4 This involves stimulating local demand for sport and providing an appropriate and accessible supply of sporting opportunities to meet demand.
- 2.5 In January 2011, the 20 projects awarded Active Women funding were announced. These projects vary by:
  - Geographical coverage (three national and 17 local, spread by region)
  - Sports offered (All are multi-sport projects, except two of the national projects: England Netball and British Cycling)
  - Type of delivery organisation (including councils, NGBs and charities)
  - Starting date (projects began delivery between autumn 2010 and spring 2011)
  - Scope (as detailed in Chapter 3, the projects vary considerably in terms of target numbers of participants)
- 2.6 The projects are scheduled to run for three years, with the exception of StreetGames which will have a two year delivery period. It is also worth noting that StreetGames is structured somewhat differently from the other projects. Whilst 19 projects receive their funding directly from Sport England, StreetGames distributes its Active Women funding to its own network of over 50 local projects.
- 2.7 A full list of all 20 projects can be found in the appendix.

### Active Women Evaluation

- 2.8 Sport England commissioned IFF Research to conduct an evaluation of the Active Women Programme, with the overarching objective of:
  - Gaining an understanding of the efficacy and value of the programme in terms of encouraging participation in sport among women.



2.9 And more specifically within this:

- To examine what works, for whom, and in what context.
- To explore the barriers to participation and to assess the role of the Active Women projects in overcoming these barriers;
- To track participants' experiences, satisfaction and behaviour;
- To isolate the specific influence of the Active Women project on participants' experiences and behaviour, in order to estimate the net impact of the programme.

2.10 The understanding gained from the research will be used to enhance the development and delivery of projects within the programme as findings are shared with Sport England and with Active Women projects throughout the programme's life. The research will also inform decisions on Sport England's investment in similar projects and programmes in the future.

2.11 This document reports on Year One of the Active Women Evaluation.

#### Methodology – Year One

2.12 The evaluation design ensured both breadth and depth, collecting some information on all 20 projects (the 'basic evaluation') and exploring issues with a selection of six projects in much greater detail (the 'focussed evaluation').

2.13 The 'basic evaluation' in Year One consisted of:

- A review of the projects' bids for funding, to give context as to their initial aims
- A face-to-face depth interview with the lead(s) at each of the 20 projects (in October / November 2011)
- Ongoing collection of six-monthly reports from each project, detailing participant numbers achieved and a variety of other measures (detailed in Chapter 3)

2.14 The six projects selected to cover in greater detail were:

- Back to Netball, England Netball
- Breeze, British Cycling
- Sport4Women, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- East Durham Belles, Wingate & Station Town Family Centre
- B-inspired, Braunstone Foundation Charity
- Think Fit, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation



2.15 The 'focussed evaluation' in Year One consisted of:

- Site visits to each of the projects, consisting of three to six in-depth interviews with those in development and delivery roles, including project leads, coaches and volunteers (in December 2011 / January 2012)
- Five in-depth interviews with participants at each project, 30 overall (in February / March 2012)
- 989 shorter quantitative interviews with participants (in March, April and May 2012)

#### Site visits

2.16 The site visits generally consisted of a series of face-to-face interviews at one of the project's delivery locations in the course of one day, with some follow-up interviews conducted over the phone where a key person was not available on the day in question. Back to Netball interviews were split over two locations, reflecting the national nature and delivery structure of the project.

2.17 The site visits contributed to 'logic models' which provide a visual summary of the assumptions behind each project, the resources devoted to it (inputs), activities undertaken by it and the particular way these are delivered (activities<sup>1</sup>), the direct product of any activity delivered e.g. number of classes taught (outputs) and the benefit or change for participants after the activity e.g. new knowledge / increased skills (outcomes) along with the longer-term benefits (impacts) it aims to achieve. These logic models are included as appendices in this report. At the conclusion of the evaluation, when the impact of the projects can be better assessed, these analytical models will help us to draw conclusions as to how far objectives have been achieved and why.

#### In-depth interviews with participants

2.18 Participants were able to choose where they would like face-to-face interviews to take place (e.g. in their home or at a local café or library); it was felt important that these interviews were not routinely conducted at the project sites themselves, in case this influenced participants' responses to the question topics. A small minority of the interviews were conducted by telephone where this was more convenient for those participating in the research.

2.19 A participant was defined as any woman who had attended one or more sessions of an Active Women project, whether or not they were still participating at the time of the research.

#### Quantitative survey

2.20 The quantitative questionnaire was designed to take 10 – 15 minutes to complete and a prize draw of £50 of love2shop vouchers was offered as an incentive for women to take part in the survey<sup>2</sup>.

2.21 Participants were invited to take part in the survey in one of three ways:

<sup>1</sup> In the terminology typically used in logic models, activities would be called throughputs – however labelling these as activities instead avoids confusion with Sport England's use of the term 'throughputs' for the total number of project attendances.

<sup>2</sup> As the fieldwork period was twice extended to allow more participants to take part in the survey, three prize draws were conducted in total.



- Where projects were able to share email addresses, IFF sent out email invites, containing a link to the survey, directly to participants.
- Participants for whom telephone numbers but no email addresses were held were contacted by IFF's telephone interviewing team and invited to complete the survey over the phone. Those with both telephone and email addresses who did not respond to the survey online (or whose email invites bounced back) were also invited to take part by telephone.
- Some projects were not able to share the contact details of their participants with IFF and therefore distributed the online link to the survey themselves.

2.22 Although StreetGames was not one of the six projects selected for the 'focussed evaluation' they were also able to distribute the online survey to their projects.

2.23 The six projects were selected as part of the 'focussed evaluation' as they represented a good cross-section of different types of projects (by the factors described in paragraph 2.5). However, this is not to say that the participants of these six projects (plus StreetGames) mirror exactly the characteristics of the participants of all 20 Active Women projects.

2.24 To understand how different groups of women have been affected by the Active Women Programme, in particular the target groups of women living in deprived areas and those with childcare responsibilities, it is also important to understand the profile of each of the projects covered by the survey. This is explored in the next chapter in terms of the profile of all women who have taken part in Active Women projects while a profile of survey respondents is also appended<sup>3</sup>.

#### Evaluation schedule

2.25 Future waves of the Active Women Evaluation will comprise:

- Following up participants who have taken part in the in-depth interviews or quantitative survey, to examine longer term impacts of the Active Women Programme;
- Site visits in Year Two and telephone depth interviews with project leads in Year Three among the projects in the focussed evaluation, as well as depth interviews with the project leads of the remaining 14 projects in Year Two;
- Telephone depth interviews with people who have enquired about taking part in projects but not actually participated (some of these interviews have already been completed but not enough to draw firm conclusions from yet);
- Telephone depth interviews with projects from the StreetGames network to provide insight into this delivery model (funding via a third party) which is new for Sport England (two of these have already been completed);
- Telephone depth interviews with other providers of sporting opportunities to women, to see if the Active Women Programme has had an impact, positive or negative, on them.

2.26 Findings from Year Two of the research will be available in Summer 2013.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that where differences are commented on in the text between sub-groups of participants who took part in the quantitative survey, these differences are statistically significant to a 95% confidence level.



### 3 Analysis of management information

#### Introduction and summary

- 3.1 All 20 Active Women projects report against a set of standard indicators that Sport England has developed to facilitate the comparison and aggregation of results across projects on the Active Women Programme and, indeed, all other projects that involve sports activity.
- 3.2 The core output measures are ‘participants’ (the total number of women who take part in sport at a project at least once) and ‘throughput’ (the volume of participation at a project i.e. the count of the total number of ‘attendances’).
- 3.3 Some projects also report on counts of ‘volunteers’ and ‘coaches’, as well as splitting their participant counts by age, ethnicity, disability, whether they live in deprived areas and whether they care for children under the age of 16.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.4 Targets for these measures were included in the initial funding bids submitted by Active Women projects and subsequently agreed between each Active Women project and Sport England by the outset of the Programme. A small number of projects made further modifications to their Year One targets after recruitment had commenced as their original targets were felt to be slightly too ambitious to achieve within the Year One timescale. However the overall, three year, targets for all projects stayed roughly the same regardless of these Year One modifications.
- 3.5 The figures which show how much progress has been made towards targets are submitted by projects to IFF Research and Sport England every six months. All but three of the projects have now completed a year of delivery and have therefore compiled and provided their figures for 2011-2012.
- 3.6 Table 3.1 illustrates the number of projects reporting on these various targets. At the time of this report, three projects had not submitted their Year One figures which meant their progress could not be compared to the other projects. The ‘Reported’ column on Table 3.1 shows the number of projects which have so far reported their Year One figures for these measures.

**Table 3.1: Number of projects with Active Women measure targets**

Active Women measure	Targets	Reported
Participants	20	17
<i>Deprived</i>	18	15
<i>Childcare</i>	14	11
<i>Age</i>	19	15
<i>Ethnicity</i>	10	7
<i>Disability</i>	7	5
Throughput	12	9
Coaches	12	11
Volunteers	11	9

- 3.7 Of the 17 projects which reported their Year One participant figures, the overall projected Year One target was 28,325 while the actual total achieved was 27,944, 99% of the target. This confirms that, on the whole, projects were on track with their delivery, at least in terms of participation.

<sup>4</sup> Throughput figures are provided as totals with no demographic breakdown required.



- 3.8 While projects were generally on track with their participant numbers, they somewhat struggled to achieve their throughput figures, a sign that projects were experiencing retention issues and finding it difficult to encourage frequent turnout at sessions. Nine projects reported their Year One throughput figures and while the total target for these nine projects was 79,429, the number achieved was 33,658, 42% of the target.
- 3.9 A key aim of the Active Women projects is to address specific barriers to participation in sport faced by women in deprived areas or women caring for children under the age of 16. Initial evidence from the management information would suggest that projects have been struggling on both these fronts:
- The overall target across the 15 projects reporting Year One figures on women living in deprived areas was 7,894. The achieved figure was 4,554, 58% of the target.
  - Of the 11 projects reporting on women caring for children under 16, the overall target was 6,406. The achieved figure was 4,147, 65% of the target.

#### Achieved participant figures by project

- 3.10 As we have already seen, at an overall level, projects appeared to be on track with their delivery in terms of participation. However, there were noticeable differences by project.
- 3.11 Ten of the 17 projects which reported their Year One participant figures had reached their target, with some projects considerably exceeding the target set (up to 163% achieved). However, some projects were struggling to reach their target, which may be due, at least in part, to high target numbers.
- 3.12 The three projects which had delivered only six month reports at the time of this report were all less than halfway towards their participant targets, however this is not a concern. Typically all projects found it difficult to recruit participants during the initial six months as they concentrated more on arranging their administrative structure and co-ordinating their marketing material. We would therefore expect to see much higher percentages when the Year One progress reports are delivered by these three projects. This is based on the expectation that these projects will have increased the number of sporting activities available to women.

#### Throughput achieved figures by project

- 3.13 Projects have not been so successful with achieving their throughput targets, suggesting that projects are struggling with retention issues, or perhaps that they are focusing significant resource on 'one-off' events, thereby helping to reach their participant targets but not sufficiently improving their throughput figures. Twelve projects report on throughput figures, nine of which have submitted their Year One progress report. At an overall level, 42% of the target throughput figure was achieved, although once more there were large distinctions between projects.
- 3.14 Of the nine projects who had delivered their Year One reports, three had achieved less than 50% of their target, ranging from 17% to 37% achieved to date. Out of the other six projects, only one had exceeded its target (172%).

#### Participants by throughput

- 3.15 Although projects were on the whole on track with their participant numbers, most clearly found it difficult to achieve their throughput targets. It is important to examine the relationship between these two measures as this provides useful context for assessing issues relating to recruitment and





retention.<sup>5</sup> The success of Active Women projects cannot merely be judged by participant numbers: the aim should be to keep hold of participants once they have attended sessions and encourage them to keep returning to further sessions to facilitate a long term benefit for participants.

- 3.16 On the whole, projects with a low number of participants were able to achieve a relatively high throughput figure: the five projects with the highest number of attendances per participant all had fewer than 1,000 participants.

#### Participants by demographic

- 3.17 A key aim of the Active Women projects is to address specific barriers to participation in sport faced by women in deprived areas or women caring for children under the age of 16.

#### Deprivation

- 3.18 As has been mentioned already, projects struggled to meet their targets for participants living in deprived areas (58% achieved of the target).
- 3.19 Only three of the 15 projects had achieved (in fact exceeded) their targets for recruiting women from deprived areas, ranging from 105% to 125% of target achieved.
- 3.20 By contrast, five projects in particular struggled to reach their target of participants living in deprived areas, with figures ranging from 12% to 31%.

#### Childcare responsibilities

- 3.21 Projects also struggled to achieve their targets for women caring for children under the age of 16 (65% of the target). While five projects were well over target, two projects that had struggled with meeting their deprived target once again struggled.
- 3.22 There is a clear correlation between the numbers targeted and the actual figures achieved as proportions of the target, namely that the higher the target, the more difficult projects found reaching it, with only one exception.

#### Ethnicity

- 3.23 Of the seven projects which had included information about the ethnicity of participants in their Year One report, nearly all (six out of seven) had achieved more participants from a minority ethnic background than they had targeted (151% achieved of the total target), showing that they were on track with this element.

#### Disability

- 3.24 Five projects had included the disability status of their participants in their Year One reports. Success was varied among projects: 80% of the overall target had been achieved, with only two projects struggling to reach their targets (15% and 34% respectively).

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<sup>5</sup> Both these areas will be considered in depth in Chapters 4 and 5.



## Age

- 3.25 Two projects had recorded information on participants under the age of 15. One exceeded their expected number (205% of target achieved), while the other fell well short of their expected total (14% of target achieved).
- 3.26 Thirteen projects had set targets and recorded information on participants aged 16-19, but only one project was able to reach the target set (116%). At an overall level, 11,149 participants this age were targeted, with 9,984 achieved, 90% of the target.
- 3.27 Projects were far more likely to engage with women aged 20 or over: at an overall level 16,135 participants this age were targeted and 16,181 were achieved.

## Coaches and Volunteers

- 3.28 In line with the goal of Active Women to increase the frequency of sporting activity among women there is also a drive to increase the numbers of women who volunteer and coach sport.
- 3.29 Eleven projects submitted their Year One progress reports including information on coaches, while a further nine also submitted information on volunteers and the figures were fairly positive. Overall, Active Women projects had achieved 331% of their Year One target for coaches and 92% of their Year One target for volunteers.
- 3.30 It is noticeable that the number of coaches was high partly as a result of a higher proportion of male coaches who had not initially been targeted. While male coaches represented 5% of the overall targets, the Year One figures show they made up 15% of the overall total achieved.
- 3.31 Only one project had difficulty reaching their target of coaches (39% achieved), whilst three projects struggled to reach their volunteer targets, ranging from 30% to 50% of volunteer target achieved.
- 3.32 Coaches were also split by their level of qualification: 'NGB qualified', 'General qualification' and 'Unqualified'. 'NGB qualified' refers to all coaches, instructors or leaders with an NGB qualification at Level 1 or equivalent and above. 'General qualified' refers to anyone with a non-sport specific formal qualification that equips them to lead or coach some sports activities, such as certain NVQs and teaching qualifications.
- 3.33 At an overall level, of those projects which submitted their Year One progress reports containing breakdowns of the types of qualifications their coaches had achieved, projects had surpassed their targets for coaches of all categories, but particularly emphatically with reference to NGB qualified coaches and unqualified coaches, as Table 3.2 shows.



**Table 3.2: Coach numbers by qualification and gender**

Active Women measure	Targets	Actuals
Of 10 projects which had submitted Year One progress reports and targeted coaches		
NGB qualified	72 (2)*	172 (25)
General qualification	69 (5)	119 (28)
Unqualified	8 (1)	85 (2)
Not stated – project did not report by level of qualification or gender	364	468
<b>Total</b>	<b>513 (8)</b>	<b>844 (55)</b>

\* Bracketed figures denote numbers of male coaches. E.g. 72 NGB qualified targeted coaches of whom two were male.



## 4 Delivering the Active Women Projects

4.1 This chapter describes the early implementation challenges and successes that projects have experienced in the first six months to a year of delivery. Later chapters consider specific issues relating to the recruitment (Chapter 5) and retention (Chapter 6) of participants; this chapter is concerned with how projects are organised, and how delivery structures and processes were found to be evolving. Specifically, this chapter covers:

- Staffing and working with volunteers;
- Partnership working;
- Finance and funding;
- Divergence from original delivery plans;
- Sustainability.

### Summary

- 4.2 Overall, projects appear to be coping well with the challenges they face implementing the Active Women Programme, though several mention teething problems.
- 4.3 Project leads and other staff and volunteers appear to work together well, keeping lines of communication open and supporting each other. Some staff members feel still greater communication could improve things e.g. with coaches being more aware of other coaches' classes, as well as more involved in the overall 'direction' of the project.
- 4.4 Those involved in the project tend to report this being a positive experience, though the (for some, unexpected) administrative burden involved in delivery can be a struggle.
- 4.5 The quality of coaches, and therefore the quality of their training, is all-important. A quality assessment could ensure coaches have reached a suitable standard. Engaging and retaining coaches and volunteers (and therefore keeping 'familiar faces' for participants) is also important.
- 4.6 Partnership working has been very beneficial for some projects, providing resources such as equipment and venues, as well as expertise in the form of additional coaches, and excellent opportunities for marketing to (particularly) hard-to-reach women. Generally partnership working is successful, but in some cases relationships have become fraught or competitive.
- 4.7 Many projects have deviated to a small extent from the original model put forward in the bid to Sport England, with smaller numbers deviating more. Generally changes were made to sessions to better accommodate participants, with smaller numbers having made more substantial changes e.g. to their budget structure or initial participant target figures.
- 4.8 Projects are anxious to take steps in order to be sustainable so that women can continue to benefit from the Active Women Programme after funding from Sport England stops. Generally, projects are looking to try and maintain provision of venues and coaches where possible, by ensuring they are paid for elsewhere where possible, such as by the local authority. Another step is to maintain and strengthen the existing links and relationships with participants and partners, as well as 'future-proofing' the project by communicating with current participants to find out what they will want going forward.



### Staffing and recruiting / managing volunteers

How are different individuals working together to successfully deliver the projects?

- 4.9 In the main, project staff seem to feel that individuals involved in the Active Women projects work together well, particularly in terms of keeping lines of communication open between coaches and volunteers, with no particular issues to report. Projects had developed different ways of sharing knowledge across staff and partners, including regular meetings with staff on a group as well as an individual basis, and meetings with partner organisations (generally less often). The project lead was also generally at the centre of this communication and tended to be a first port of call for staff and volunteers as well as partners, such that the links created by this individual were considered pivotal to the success of the project.
- 4.10 For instance, staff from Breeze mentioned that the Breeze Champions – trained volunteers who lead bike rides and try and increase knowledge of the project locally - are the project's "eyes and ears on the ground", and the communication between these and the project coordinators is very good – the Champions can call the project co-ordinators directly, who always respond quickly and make it clear how much their time is appreciated.
- 4.11 Staff at B-inspired also mentioned specific organised channels of communication:
- Operation meeting once a month when all the project partners come together
  - Manager's meeting takes place bi-monthly or quarterly, depending on what needs to be done, and it is very 'action orientated'
  - Individual members of staff are made aware of their own targets for specific aspects of the project e.g. target numbers for swimming, to allow them to take ownership of areas of the project
- 4.12 However, projects also mentioned potential improvements in terms of working together. Areas identified included increased communication *between* coaches, as well as improved team working between coaches and project leads.
- 4.13 In terms of communication between coaches, some felt that ideally coaches would have access to other coaches' contact details and timetables, enabling them to refer participants smoothly to other areas of the project. Some coaches also felt that more communication with other coaches would be helpful in terms of sharing experiences and tips on delivering sessions to the target group.
- 4.14 As well as increased contact between coaches, one head coach would have appreciated a greater level of input overall into the project, citing that initially coaches had been more involved with the direction of the project, including marketing and partnership working. However as time went on she felt coaches were 'overlooked' somewhat at the strategic level and a gap developed between decision makers and the coaches 'on the ground.' While this issue was only specifically mentioned by one project, it may be the case more widely that coaches (particularly experienced ones) may have insight to offer in terms of communicating with participants.

What is the experience of those delivering the projects?

- 4.15 In general, staff and volunteers who deliver the Active Women projects appear to enjoy being involved and enthuse about the projects they are involved in.



- 4.16 That said, some issues around engagement and retention of staff and volunteers were also highlighted. These included the need to improve incentivisation for volunteers; the administrative burden on staff of all levels as well as volunteers; and (for some) low numbers of volunteers in certain areas.
- 4.17 Some projects mentioned that rewarding and incentivising volunteers could be improved, for instance the project lead at Breeze was concerned that the incentives offered to Breeze Champions (t-shirts and a prize for Champion of the Month) was not enough when compared to the £45 received by Leaders of Sky Rides (a similar venture in London); she felt that Champions wanted a higher level of recognition.
- 4.18 Back to Netball staff were also mindful of keeping their volunteers engaged, and cited that they had started a volunteer reward scheme and gave key volunteers t-shirts.
- 4.19 One issue mentioned was the administrative burden on staff, with several projects citing this could be a problem for project coordinators as well as other staff members and volunteers (due to lack of funding for an actual administrator, or sometimes because drafting in volunteers to help with the administrative side of things as planned took a little while to get organised). Another issue was some initial uncertainty over exactly what administrative information was required by Sport England. For some projects, specific tasks that had not been originally foreseen as necessary were particularly time consuming.
- 4.20 Some staff have been doing so much coaching that there has generally been little time left for promotional events and, for project leads, making sure their staff's workload is manageable has been a challenge. One coach felt that some initial time management training would have been helpful, as the initial hours were erratic and paperwork had to fit around them.
- 4.21 In a similar vein, one project lead mentioned that the initial guidance provided by Sport England on which forms needed to be filled out, and what procedures needed to be taken, was only minimal. This meant that the administrative side of the project was particularly challenging at the start, and more bureaucratic than expected. This project highlighted that some extra resource in form of a central administrator would be helpful to ease the burden, but that there was no resource for this. Indeed, staff at one project cited that since the project was still in its early stages, volunteers were not very well established and only tended to give admin help on a one-off basis, meaning greater initial pressure on the small project team.
- 4.22 A specific task which was cited by one project lead as being quite administratively burdensome was tracking which enquirers became participants. The project lead collected details of all those who enquired and those who participated, but had no time to cross-reference the two databases and so was not sure how many were 'converting' from enquiring to participating, but would be interested to hear of a database tool that could make this process easier. Indeed, it was not unusual for project leads to find that the necessary project tasks took longer than anticipated – one lead highlighted that she was spending 100% of her time on the project rather than the original 50% anticipated.
- 4.23 A few projects also mentioned that a simple lack of volunteer numbers in certain areas meant that sessions were sometimes unable to run, for instance project staff at Breeze mentioned that two Champions were required if the ride was to take place on a road, but in rural areas it was likely that there would only be one local Champion.
- 4.24 Similarly, it was widely recognised that having volunteers go out into the community and speak to women was the most effective way of getting women involved, however this was also particularly resource intensive.



## Quality and training of coaches

- 4.25 All project leads talked about the importance of high quality coaches and the role they play in recruiting and retaining participants. In the main project leads spoke very highly of their coaches as friendly and approachable, reassuring to new participants and generally proactive about contacting participants between sessions if necessary (and this is generally reflected by feedback from participants, covered in detail in Chapter 6 which looks at how to encourage women to keep coming back to Active Women projects). Where coaches have remained consistent, project staff have reported that participants tend to return more often due to the bonds established.
- 4.26 That said, some project leads and head coaches reported some concerns about the quality of some of the coaches appointed to lead sessions. Some felt simply that some coaches were not familiar enough with the rules of the sports played, while others felt that some coaches may benefit from specific training in order to 'boost' their confidence and therefore overall performance.
- 4.27 Considering concerns over the quality of coaches, some head coaches felt there should be some kind of standard quality assessment or test before the coaches could teach on their own, as at present the coaches simply had to complete a certain number of training hours and the head coaches did not feel that this guaranteed a quality service.
- 4.28 In a similar vein, some project staff felt that extra training for coaches on a variety of areas would be helpful, for example basic medical training so they would be more prepared if women had health issues. In addition, one coach mentioned that arguments were not uncommon among the 19-25 year olds attending the sessions and that coaches generally did not have the training or confidence to deal with these confrontations which could delay the class and disrupt the dynamic – empowerment or confidence training for coaches could help here.
- 4.29 It is worth noting that although projects are largely hitting targets for coaches trained (see Chapter 3), some mention that training participants 'from scratch' to be volunteer and then paid coaches could often be a challenge. The training and commitment needed on the part of the trainee is considerable, and could potentially contradict the project's usual emphasis on fun and socialising rather than 'sport' and the technicalities and rules involved. Some projects also mentioned that coaches must attain the Level Two qualification in their chosen sport before they can coach others, which is additional barrier requiring an additional investment of time on the part of the trainee, as well as funding on the part of the project. For this reason, projects attempting to train coaches 'from scratch' – particularly from the target groups – have found it difficult to recruit women to the cause. Even where Level Two is not required, it is still a significant ask of target women who are likely to be relatively time poor, or unfamiliar with the concept of sport in general, so that the idea of learning to coach a particular sport is not necessarily an attractive one.
- 4.30 Other project staff mentioned the importance of having consistent coaches, and therefore retaining coaches on the project after their training wherever possible. Several projects found that women tended to feel far more comfortable attending sessions run by a consistent coach who they came to know, leading to a higher retention rate. One project was particularly keen on keeping their coaches consistent because they felt that many of the staff had personal reasons for being involved in the project, having themselves struggled with a lack of confidence or weight issues, which made them particularly well placed to relate to women on the project.

## Partnership working

- 4.31 Projects reported that successful partnership working was an important aspect of the Active Women Programme, as partners could provide assistance across a number of aspects, such as:



- Marketing;
  - Coaching;
  - Providing more variety, or an increase, in the activities available; and
  - A general increase in resource.
- 4.32 Projects have been successful in terms of forming partnerships with various different organisations. Many made links with local schools and colleges, as well as children's centres and family workers (felt to be useful for forging community links in deprived areas). It was also fairly common for projects to team up with leisure centres, as well as other sporting organisations with a similar offering to their own. Other partnerships were formed with the NHS, local authorities, weight management groups and local community groups such as those for Muslim women.
- 4.33 Generally, partnership links appear to be working well, with many projects asserting that their offering or their participant numbers would be substantially reduced had they not teamed up with other organisations.
- 4.34 A few projects did report that some partnerships had become fraught or competitive, however, for example one project reported that the leisure centre in which sessions are held do not allow explicit advertising of the sessions within the centre as the sessions are cheaper than those provided by the leisure centre. Some mentioned that specific partners can be difficult to engage (one project lead mentioned a children's centre as an example, but another had found this source of partnership working incredibly helpful).
- 4.35 Other projects mentioned that some staff at partner organisations who regularly came into contact with Active Women participants were initially not always very aware of the issues that many of the women may be facing, and were not as understanding as they could have been. For example, coaches at one project felt that some workshops or awareness sessions for all leisure centre staff likely to come into contact with participants would have been helpful. One cited the example of male staff previously walking into sessions to fix some equipment without realising they could cause upset to the Muslim participants. Others mentioned that a receptionist at a leisure centre who is not knowledgeable or enthusiastic about the project can easily put women off, hence some training here with any leisure centre partners could have been beneficial. The coach felt that a standard workshop for all staff covering the basics would be helpful, particularly when beginning partnerships with new leisure centres.

#### Marketing

- 4.36 Several projects had made links predominantly with organisations through which they would be able to reach a larger and more diverse audience than would have been possible otherwise.
- 4.37 For example Breeze are now forming links with the NHS (as the majority of NHS staff are women), the Women's Institute and Weightwatchers. Since Breeze have also built up a brand on a national scale through their links with British Cycling, they can now approach other potential partners on a national level.
- 4.38 Back to Netball also engaged in partnership working, as they have teamed up with organisations in Leeds such as Health4all and Run4all in Leeds, as well as local schools, and sometimes get women referred to the project from these. The project also made links with the Muslim community by coaches attending a local Muslim women's coffee morning and introducing the idea of sport that way. Sport4Women also took advantage of a partnership with the Muslim's Women's Collective, which is particularly beneficial given this project is based in Tower Hamlets with a large Muslim population.





Sharing resources, coaches and sessions

- 4.39 Projects also found that partnership organisations were a useful way of increasing resources, both in terms of staffing and availability of additional sessions. Where partner organisations were providers of sessions these were typically in different activities allowing projects to expand their offering, although in some cases this was also about being able to meet demand for a particular activity by simply providing sessions in the same activity offered by the project.
- 4.40 For example, the project lead of Sport4Women felt the project's collaboration with the Muslim Women Collective and Badminton England was particularly positive – the latter had been training members of the former to be coaches, which is where the project initially got its coaches from.
- 4.41 Other projects found that links with other organisations meant they could offer sessions that they would not have been able to otherwise. For example B-inspired was not originally able to meet the high demand for swimming lessons, but by linking up with Learn to Swim (a local authority provider of lessons), the project was able to deliver a greater range and number of sessions. Likewise, the same project formed links with Leicester City Council in order to provide a larger number of bikes and instructors. Additionally, while B-inspired did not receive the additional funding hoped for, their links with The Achievement Project, which did receive funding, was beneficial.
- 4.42 Similarly, the lead at Think Fit asserted that the project would not have been able to expand as they had without drawing on partnerships and in-kind payments, for example project partners provided Zumba and self-defence classes, which funding would not have covered ordinarily.
- 4.43 A potential additional resource cited by the project leads at Sport4women and Back to Netball are Sport Makers – volunteers who have signed up to Places People Play, Sport England's plan to use the idea of the Olympics as a 'springboard' to encourage more people to play sport and get active. The project leads had considered utilising these volunteers as part of their projects, though were yet to approach them.

Finance and funding

- 4.44 In general, projects do not report major financial concerns and generally appear to be on budget, sometimes helped by partnership organisations or additional funding from other sources. That said, several projects reported wanting to be able to provide more facilities than currently (sometimes unexpectedly, as a result of feedback from participants) but not being able to due to funding constraints. In addition, some projects experienced funding being withdrawn by partners such as local authorities due to recent budget cuts, leaving projects with fewer resources than expected. Where this has been the case, projects have had to adapt their delivery plans accordingly. For example, B-Active staff reported that a crèche was initially provided by the Local Authority, but that this was stopped following budget cuts, though the project was able to rectify the situation by linking up with charities that can offer a mobile crèche facility.
- 4.45 The following are examples of extras that some projects would like to be able to provide, but for which the funding is not currently available:
- Sport4Women recently put in a bid for more funding to deliver self defence classes, but due to the high demand for funding, is not hopeful that it will be received.
  - East Durham Belles now have a Facebook presence but the resource isn't available to have a website designed, though they feel this would be beneficial.



- East Durham Belles struggle to get women participating in swimming as they would prefer more privacy in the changing rooms, but the project does not have the resource to provide this.
- Many projects would like the opportunity to send more of their volunteers on proper coaching courses, but the cost is considered huge.
- If there was funding available for a mini bus, the leisure centre manager believes this would help women to come on a more regular basis.
- Several projects mentioned that they were limited in when they could offer sessions due to the high cost of facilities, with leisure centres less willing to provide 'in kind' or reduced rates at popular times when other organisations will pay more.

4.46 In addition, some projects mention issues with funding if they were to expand, for instance staff at East Durham Belles would ideally like to expand further into East Durham, but would need extra funding if they were to apply the model that had worked in the Wingate area.

4.47 Some projects would like to apply for extra funding but are not hopeful of getting it because they aware that so many similar organisations will be applying for the same thing. However, it is also the case that receiving funding is not always straight forward for projects – Back to Netball was given funding by local councils and as a result the project lead feels the funders want to influence the direction of the project. However as the project wants to focus on its own targets and strategic direction, they feel it would have been easier if all their funding had been from Sport England for the initial three year delivery period.

4.48 It was commonly felt that corporate sponsorship could be beneficial – for example, the project manager at Breeze felt that brand building would have been aided, and the speed of recruitment increased, by having a corporate sponsor in place – but projects have not yet fully explored this funding option.

#### Divergence from original models

4.49 While all projects started with a particular delivery model in mind, some divergence from this occurred for some projects. This mainly involved adapting the sessions offered to better suit those attending or volunteering. However, sometimes the adjustment was more significant and involved budgetary shifts to reflect their growing experience of the project and changing opinions on where money would be most effectively spent.

4.50 Common reasons for divergence from original delivery plans included:

- Reducing the focus on provision of childcare due to cost and difficulties providing this;
- A trial and error approach to trying different initiatives meaning that some early ideas were found to be unsuccessful;
- Adapting the content of sessions to better reflect the needs of the participant base, including a reduction in the use of spoken language, increasing the emphasis on fun and reducing the 'skills' aspect;
- Adapting training for volunteers and champions to better meet their needs, in terms of making the training less technical.

4.51 In terms of finance, East Durham Belles adapted their budget for 2012 so that more money was spent on promoting the project and coaching, and less on transport and childcare. The project lead acknowledged that crèches attract new participants but they felt this care cost a disproportionate



- amount of money compared to the benefit reaped, particularly if only small numbers of participants use them, so this facility was now only offered in the school holidays.
- 4.52 Think Fit also made the decision not to provide childcare, as it was too expensive. Staff at Back to Netball felt that trying to find an 'affordable' crèche that kept the children well away from the session could be the best option (rather than have a volunteer watch the children for free in the corner of the sports hall), as many mums enjoyed the fact that the session was 'me-time' and did not have to worry about their children for an hour. That said, the project lead acknowledged that you have to guarantee numbers to make the investment worth it, and this often isn't possible.
- 4.53 Breeze changed their original set of rides to accommodate families and children by going at a slower pace and staying away from roads.
- 4.54 Other project staff mentioned that some initiatives were changed due to poor attendance. For example, Breeze initially hosted virtual mass cycles nine times a year (where women are led on a cycle by a Breeze Champion and then they can post their achievement on an interactive webpage). However the turnout for the nine rides was poor, so there is no 'mass cycle event' but many smaller ones led by ordinary women (aided by Breeze) rather than trained Champions. The project still provides plenty of downloadable resources and women can still post about the rides they have done, but they can now ride on any weekend rather than just the original nine.
- 4.55 Some projects altered the way sessions were presented to take account of different participants' needs and preferences. This typically meant either making sessions more social, less competitive, and less 'traditionally sporty' in the sense of practising skills. For instance, some Back to Netball sessions were tailored to the Asian women attending by being much more relaxed with regards to rules, and more fun-based rather than skills orientated, to take account of the language barrier.
- 4.56 Other projects also toned down the 'sporty' nature of the session as far as they could, in order to appeal to women who have done very little sport before, for example Breeze concentrated on marketing a 'ride' to the shops or a cafe, rather than using terminology like 'cycling', and emphasised the time that the ride would take, rather than the distance. Other projects offer Zumba or un-coached fitness classes, in order to appeal to women on an active, but a non-sporting, level.
- 4.57 Similarly, many projects also provide non-active offerings for instance confidence building classes, healthy eating and sexual health classes, which aim to make women feel comfortable in the environment of the project and increase their self-esteem as first steps to encouraging participation in activity.
- 4.58 In terms of the training required to become volunteer coaches or project Champions, projects were keen to make sure that it was suitable for those taking it. For example the training of Champions at Breeze needed softening as the standard course was a British Cycling Level 1 Ride qualification and was considered very formal with a lot of technical terminology as well as some areas, such as risk assessment and child protection, which could sound quite intimidating. The training was therefore completely reviewed and future training would be tailored more towards the requirements of Breeze Champions. Other projects looked into offering pre-training courses for volunteers, to increase their confidence more generally.
- 4.59 Going forward, some projects would like to be able to adapt the sessions offered to meet changing participant demand, including offering different sports or activities not named in their original bid. There is a sense that there is a need for greater clarity from Sport England on whether this is acceptable and/or encouraged. In particular, there is inconsistency among projects about whether or not dance and exercise classes (e.g. Zumba) are covered by Sport England funding. Many have found that



dance and exercises classes are a highly useful way of initially engaging target women, but while some run these sessions under the Active Women banner others need to draw on other funding streams for these sessions.

### Sustainability

- 4.60 Projects are anxious to keep activity sessions going beyond the end of the three years of funding provided by Sport England, so that the women who have taken part can continue to enjoy the benefits of regular exercise. To this end, projects are taking various steps to try and ensure the sessions can continue to some extent on a self-perpetuating basis.
- 4.61 A large consideration is funding, for instance to pay for coaches (and to keep these as consistent as possible), as well as for venues and marketing the project (to ensure new women continue to be recruited), plus keeping up the networks of communication as far as possible with existing participants to keep them coming back.
- 4.62 Some projects have looked to have the difficulty level of activity grow 'with' participants for some sessions, such that as their skills develop they are still challenged and want to continue attending. That said, many sessions would also remain at beginner level to appeal to new recruits and women who are not interested in improving their sporting skills but simply want to be active in a sociable context. As an example, Breeze are introducing different levels of ride so that those who started out as beginners can now do harder rides if they want (however, as mentioned, the project lead is hesitant about doing this too much as the Breeze ethos is to appeal to people who would not normally ride bikes).
- 4.63 In terms of keeping networks going, the Breeze project manager particularly mentioned that when the resources and marketing do come to an end with the Sport England funding, some of the networks created through Breeze would continue, due to the great relationships developed between Champions and participants.
- 4.64 Another example of long-term thinking with regards participants is Sport4Women; the coach feels that much could be done by utilising the views of current participants in order to understand what is most wanted for the future. Evaluation forms are currently sent out to all participants but she feels more could be done to gather knowledge to 'future proof' the project.
- 4.65 Other projects have taken deliberate steps to ensure coaches will still be available for the project (and employed for themselves) after the cessation of funding. For instance Sport4Women aim to ensure that all trainee coaches who complete their voluntary hours and become paid staff will continue to be employed by GLL (rather than by the Active Women project specifically) after the project has finished at the end of the three years.
- 4.66 Similarly, some projects have started to utilise self-employed coaches, for example a Zumba teacher was asked to coach some sessions, after which the coach was offered the chance to take more control of the sessions by booking her own venues, managing her own marketing and keeping any profit from fees paid. This not only means it is in the coach's best interest to book the most suitable venues and advertise the classes as well as possible, but also means the participants can be assured a consistent and expert coach.



## 5 Recruitment of women to the Active Women Programme

### Summary

- 5.1 At an overall level, projects are managing to hit target numbers in terms of participants recruited, though this varies widely between projects, with some considerably exceeding their targets and some falling short. However meeting targets for women in disadvantaged areas and those caring for children is proving more challenging for some.
- 5.2 The key to successful recruitment is to address the concerns and motivators that prevent and encourage women to attend sessions like these.
- 5.3 Most women find out about the Active Women Programme through a friend's recommendation, and decide then to attend sessions for a number of reasons, including (particularly) their friend's recommendation, low cost of sessions, low commitment, convenient venue location and convenient session times.
- 5.4 While some women have no qualms about attending a session for the first time, even on their own, these women are likely to be the minority, particularly among those falling into the groups specifically targeted by the project – those living in disadvantaged areas, and those caring for children.
- 5.5 Women are often initially concerned that they will not be very good at the sport or will not remember the rules from when they were younger. Some were concerned that their level of fitness would be below others in the group. Others were particularly self-conscious about their weight, and so sometimes also about wearing sports clothes (particularly swimming costumes) in front of others.
- 5.6 Recruitment therefore should take account of both the motivating factors, and the barriers. To this end, projects have found the following to be particularly effective:
  - Face-to-face recruitment wherever possible at public launch events, where women can meet coaches as well as participants, and see example activity sessions in action
  - Personal follow-up contact from coaches following any public events
  - Overtly encouraging existing participants to 'bring a friend'
  - Wide promotion throughout the whole community in areas women are likely to be (not just leisure centres) using a variety of media (posters / leaflets / social media)
  - Form links with various partnership organisations within the community in order to engage women from a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, lifestyles and religions
  - Providing easy-to-access practical information about what sessions will entail
  - Mythbusting, including preconceptions that you have to be 'in shape' to enjoy sport; and reassuring prospective participants that most others will also be beginners



## Introduction

- 5.7 Active Women projects are targeted at women who are less likely to take part in other sporting activities or be very active in general, specifically those living in deprived areas, and those caring for children. These target groups are not likely to walk into a leisure centre and enquire about activities, or proactively search online for ways to get involved in sport.
- 5.8 As discussed in Chapter 3, projects on the whole are managing to recruit the overall volumes of participants needed to hit their overall targets (though, as mentioned in this chapter and explored in detail in Chapter 3, projects seem to have had more difficulty keeping women participating for longer periods of time).
- 5.9 This, and speaking to members of project staff, suggests that in general the models for recruitment that were put forward during the bidding process are working (while some projects have altered their approach slightly since, they tend not to deviate from their original plan a great deal).
- 5.10 That said, there are considerable differences between projects. Several projects were well ahead of their targets, ranging from 140% to 163% of target achieved. But there were a couple that appeared to have struggled, with 28% and 58% of target achieved.
- 5.11 As well as recruiting women to these sporting projects, as discussed here already the main aim of the Active Women projects is to address specific barriers to participation in sport faced by women in deprived areas or women caring for children under the age of 16. As reported in Chapter 3, evidence from the management information collected by projects would suggest that projects were struggling on both these fronts.
- 5.12 Looking at the interviews with participants, the following proportions fell into these target groups:
- 41% lived in deprived areas
  - 46% cared for children under 16
  - 22% lived in deprived areas AND cared for children under 16
  - 30% did not fall into either target group
- 5.13 The quantitative evidence suggests that there is still progress to make in recruiting target women to Active Women projects. In order to get these target groups of women participating in sport through Active Women projects, considerable thought needs to be given to how and where the projects should be promoted. For many of these women, taking the all-important first step of turning up to a session could be daunting and require them to overcome all kinds of barriers (the first of which could be a complete lack of awareness of the sessions, or even of the benefits of exercise). Therefore, to ensure the maximum number of women reap the benefit of the programme, and to enable projects to meet their targets, it is essential that women in the target groups are informed and encouraged to take part as effectively as possible.
- 5.14 Good promotion should obviously look to let women know the different projects exist, and inform of the practical aspects of attending such as session location and times (though the various ways of doing so will be discussed further in this chapter). However there is also a wider role to be played. Successful promotion and recruitment should consider the barriers to initially getting involved that women in the target groups face, as well as the 'nudges' or motivators that will particularly encourage women to take the step of attending their first session. These barriers and motivators will be different for different women, and projects should look to use what works for their target group.

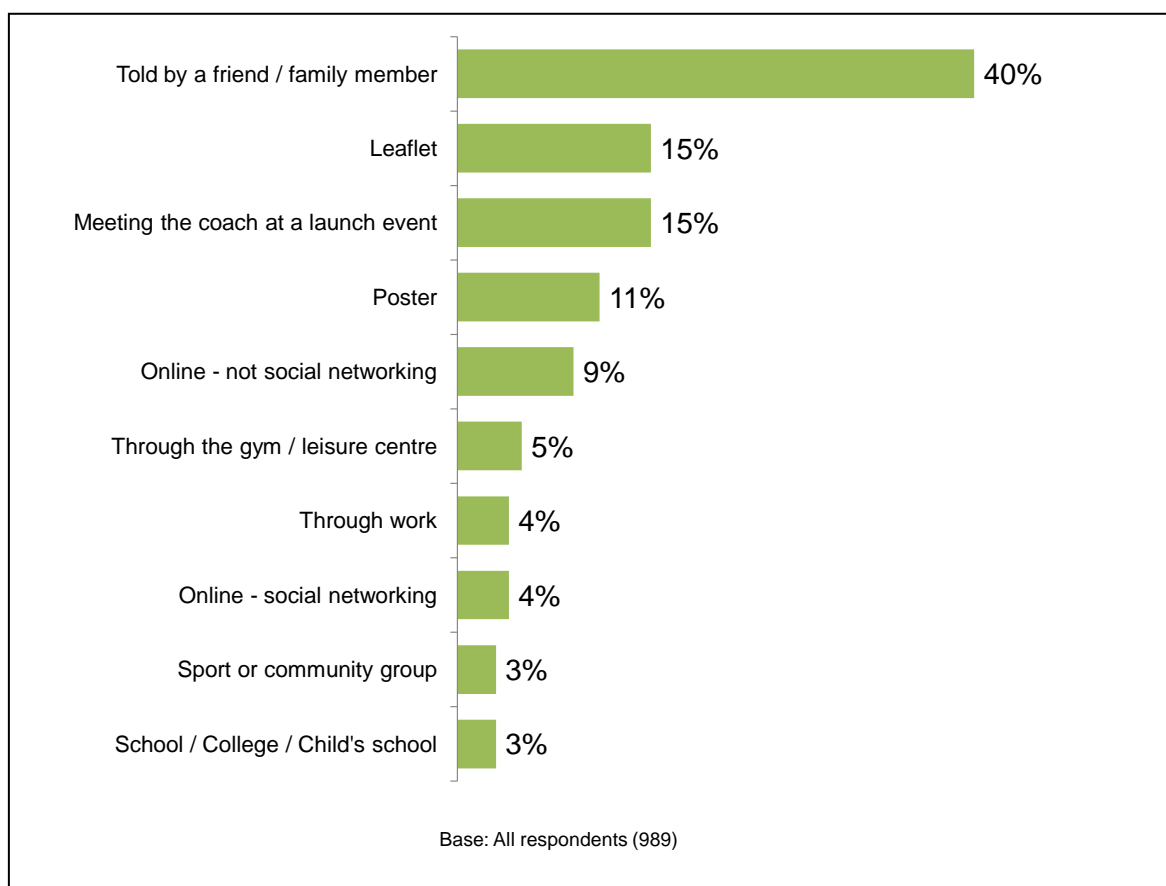


- 5.15 Indeed, when asked what improvements could be made to the project, wider and more effective, target promotion is one of the more common answers given by women participants, both in terms of scope (e.g. more promotion, via more media, in more areas) and method (particular emphasis on certain aspects of the programme).
- 5.16 This chapter will first look at how current participants were recruited to the project, including what information was available and in what format, and what made women want to go for the first time. The chapter will also look at the kinds of barriers that may prevent women going to an activity session for the first time (particularly those who fall into the target groups), and how knowledge of these can be used to inform effective ways of recruiting.

#### How women currently hear about the project

- 5.17 Interviews with both participants and project staff suggest that large numbers of participants learn about Active Women project sessions, and decide to attend, because they are told about them by other women.
- 5.18 In fact, in the quantitative survey, women were most likely to have heard about the project from a friend, with almost two in five (40%) women having heard about the project through a friend or family member (see Figure 5.1). The chart also shows that leaflets (15%), and meeting coaches or staff at a launch event (15%), are effective when recruiting.
- 5.19 Looking more closely, the youngest age group (16-24) were the most likely to have heard about the project from a friend or family member (49% compared to 40% overall).
- 5.20 In terms of meeting coaches at a launch event, this appeared to be particularly effective at reaching women in deprived areas who did not have children - 21% of women in this group cited becoming aware of the Active Women Programme in this way, compared to 15% overall.
- 5.21 It should be noted that women from deprived areas were less likely than women from non-deprived areas to have heard about the Active Women Programme online other than on a social networking site (9% overall compared to 5% deprived and 11% non-deprived).
- 5.22 As women in deprived areas are one of the Programme's target groups, it is important to take into account that this audience may have less access to this form of marketing than those from non-deprived areas.



**Figure 5.1: How women found out about the project**

5.23 Speaking to the projects supports these findings; several mention that face-to-face outreach work (getting volunteers and coaches to go into the community and speak to different groups) and launch events (in public places such as supermarkets and railway stations) are particularly successful in getting new women engaged. This means many projects try to recruit in this way, though do mention it is labour intensive.

5.24 Projects also tend to use some kind of leaflet or poster to raise awareness of the sessions (to varying extents), though project staff do mention that there sometimes needs to be more thought put into where they are displayed. Some projects have also invested time in marketing online, with Facebook being a particularly useful resource. In addition larger, national projects tend to have a website, though this seems harder for smaller, local projects. Overall, projects are utilising several marketing channels to advertise the sessions, though many mention it is difficult to get the message out to those living in disadvantaged areas.

#### Experience of sport prior to Active Women

5.25 The quantitative survey showed that in the month prior to joining an Active Women session one in three (34%) participants had not done any sport or activity. However, almost three in ten (28%) had been participating in such activities at least three times a week, suggesting that some projects have struggled to attract enough women who face barriers participating in sport.

5.26 There was variation between projects. On one project 12% of participants had not done any sport or activity in the month before joining Active Women, while on another project it was as much as 46%.

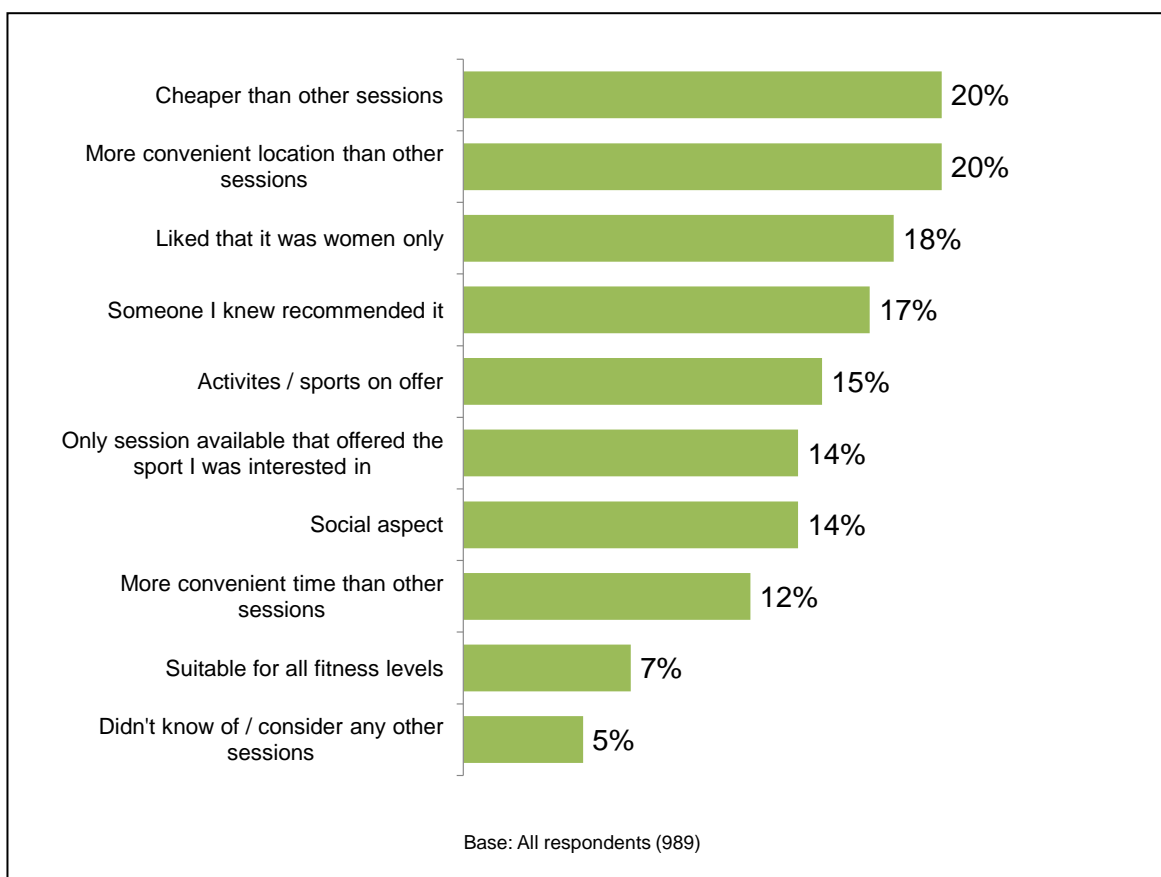




Motivation for getting involved with the projects

5.27 While some women did have concerns about getting involved (discussed later), there were also particular motivating factors that spurred women into participating (particularly) in an Active Women project session, and these should also be taken into account when thinking about how to recruit women. Figure 5.2 shows the results from the quantitative survey when participants were asked why they chose to attend an Active Women session rather than a different kind of sporting activity.

**Figure 5.2: Why women first chose to attend an Active Women session**



5.28 An important reason that women choose to first attend an Active Women session over others in the area was the low cost of the activities (a reason given by 20% of participants in the quantitative survey). Many Active Women sessions are free while others are in the region of £1-2. Again this is one of the most important reasons that women keep returning to sessions, as mentioned in the retention chapter, though it is also a key reason why women feel able to attend for the first time; no one wants to spend money on something that they feel a bit hesitant about, and think that they might not like.

5.29 Women from deprived areas who also cared for children (so women falling into both of the Active Women target groups) were particularly likely to mention the low cost of sessions as a reason for attending Active Women sessions above others available (25% compared to 20% overall).

5.30 Likewise, on the qualitative side, several women commented that the drop-in element of the programme made it particularly easy to try a session for the first time in the knowledge that there would no pressure to sign up for a course, meaning that a time and money commitment would not be



required long-term. Again, the next chapter which covers retention emphasises that running the sessions on a drop-in basis enabled women to keep attending regularly without feeling committed to attend every session.

- 5.31 One of the most commonly mentioned reasons for attending an Active Women session for the first time rather than trying a different kind of activity was due to the convenient locations of the sessions (20%), which made it particularly easy to go along and try the activity out. This was also supported by the qualitative research, where women mentioned the advertised sessions were generally very local (i.e. walking distance or a short bus ride away) which reduced the cost and time of travelling to and from the sessions, particularly important for those women being specifically target by the projects – those caring for children and those living in deprived areas.
- 5.32 Indeed, as mentioned the next chapter, inconvenient venue locations was one of the main reasons women eventually stopped attending. Therefore when promoting the sessions, it would seem particularly worthwhile to emphasise the times and locations in the context of making it easy to initially give something new a try.
- 5.33 The qualitative research also highlighted that the timing of the sessions made it easier for women to take the first step and try an activity for the first time, as a variety of session times were available to cater for parents (sessions in the mornings) as well as in the evenings (for women returning from work). This was borne out also in the quantitative survey, with 12% of women overall choosing an Active Women session because the session times were convenient. Women who lived in deprived areas and also cared for children were more likely to cite the convenient time of sessions as a reason for attending for the first time (17%), compared even to women with children who did not live in deprived areas (13%), which highlights the importance of affordable childcare particularly within deprived areas.
- 5.34 Another one of the programme's strengths is the fact that it is designed solely for women (mentioned by 18% of women responding to the quantitative survey as the reason why they chose to participate in an Active Women session). Women of all ages commented within the qualitative research that the women-only atmosphere is particularly relaxing and makes them feel at ease. Looking at this result by religion of participant shows this women-only element is also a particular draw for Muslim women (31% Muslim compared to 18% overall). The project Sport4Women, based in Tower Hamlets where there is a large Muslim population, is well aware of this – indeed the coaches at this project emphasised that many of their Muslim participants would not have considered attending sessions if men were allowed to participate also (or even if male staff were involved in the project's delivery).
- 5.35 Several women in the qualitative research also commented that the Active Women offering was relatively unique in that for some projects, childcare was offered alongside sessions. It seems that where projects have the capacity to offer childcare alongside sessions it can make women keener to attend a project for the first time – not only because the childcare made the first session convenient, but because this offering increases the potential to attend on a more regular basis (which increases the 'point' of attending a first session).
- 5.36 However, a very low proportion of survey participants (1%) actually reported that they chose to attend their Active Women session because the session provided childcare, perhaps reflecting the fact that few projects were offering this facility. Indeed, while project leads acknowledged child caring responsibilities as a key barrier to participating in sport they reported that they were struggling to find affordable methods of combating this issue.
- 5.37 Many women mentioned that they had been encouraged to go along to a session for the first time due to the emphasis on socialising and fun rather than simply getting fit or competing (on posters, leaflets



and when speaking face-to-face with staff in the community or at launch events). Women mentioned this kind of promotion reassured them, as it reduced the initial concern that they might not be 'good enough' to take part. All the projects have this general stance, with staff from Back to Netball vocalising what many projects probably feel – that getting the wording right in this regard is particularly important (their slogan is “have fun, get fit, make friends”), and it seems in general this approach is encouraging new recruits.

#### Concerns women had before attending the project

- 5.38 Some women had no concerns about approaching a project session for the first time. Often these women attended with friends, or were relatively accustomed to doing exercise already and were simply trying a different kind of activity (though this was not always the case).
- 5.39 That said some women did highlight concerns that they had before attending for the first time. These were generally linked to fears that other women would be better at sport than them and that they themselves may be laughed at, or may hold the session back.

*'All four of us admitted that we were quite intimidated before we actually went to the first session. None of us had played for such a long time and we thought it would be really professional. What my friend did find out was that it was very informal 'back to netball' and you didn't have to be ace at it...this was definitely appealing.'*

(25 – 34, No child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – Back to Netball)

- 5.40 A few were concerned about the actual activity – for instance one woman mentioned signing up for swimming classes because she wanted to learn how to swim, but was so concerned about getting in the water that she missed some sessions at the beginning, whereas another woman was concerned she would not remember the rules of badminton.
- 5.41 Some women mentioned they were hesitant about going to Active Women sessions because they were self-conscious about their weight or the way they looked, with some mentioning a particular nervousness around wearing sports clothes or a swimming costume in front of other people. This is a particular consideration for women in the target group as many have not exercised for a long time.
- 5.42 Additionally, some women were simply nervous about going into an unfamiliar environment where they did not know anyone else, and taking part in an activity that they had not done for a while, or ever.
- 5.43 It should also be noted that due to the location of some of the projects, a relatively high number of the women being targeted are Muslim. As aforementioned, these women are more likely to be concerned about men seeing them exercise in a mainstream location. These women may also be more difficult to recruit because culturally it could be considered more unusual for Muslim women (particularly wives and mothers) to spend time away from the home and taking part in sport. Indeed, projects in areas with relatively high proportions of Muslim women have taken particular steps to target this group, as discussed later.

#### Effective recruitment: Utilising motivation and allaying fears

- 5.44 The concerns and motivations mentioned by women participants provide some insight into the kind of promotion that may be particularly effective when trying to recruit women from the target groups – those caring for children and those living in deprived areas. Some main themes are discussed below.



## In-person and proactive promotion in the community

- 5.45 One of the most valuable and effective ways of recruiting women seems to be through meeting a representative of the project, as well as women already taking part, at publicity events. These are located in public places where women are likely to be anyway and feel comfortable, such as at their children's school or college, cafes, local shopping centre, local religious building or other local group such as Weight Watchers or equivalent. The women who had been approached proactively by someone from the project spoke highly of this initial contact and found it put them at their ease and allowed them to ask questions directly about anything that was concerning them, while being personally encouraged by the rep's enthusiasm and friendliness.

*'If you give someone a leaflet they may attend but they have to be half interested anyway. If you really want to get people who are too shy or worried [you need to be there in person] ... - you know the way they try and get you to join Sky or change your electricity supplier – that's what they should be doing – be more proactive'*

(35 – 44, Child caring responsibilities, Deprived – Think Fit)

- 5.46 This face-to-face contact could help to diffuse many of the concerns that women may have about going to an activity session for the first time, for example those mentioned previously such as being body-conscious or concerned the fitness level of the group would be beyond them. In fact several women who did not have this initial personal contact commented that it would have helped them to feel better about attending for the first time. Sport4Women and Back to Netball, particularly, found that this kind of 'in action' face-to-face promotion is the most effective for gaining new recruits, and have organised launch events in railway stations and shopping centres as well as local schools and colleges.
- 5.47 In addition, it seems that follow-up contact after this initial meeting helps to further solidify the relationship made, and could increase the likelihood that women continue to feel enthused about attending a session; some women gave the example that they signed up when approached by a rep at their local or shopping centre, and then received a subsequent text or email contact as a reminder of session times, or with a link to more information, or simply to encourage the women once again to turn up for the first time. To this end, coaches at Sport4Women give their personal number to prospective participants so they can call and ask questions before they arrive for the first time.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS**

Think Fit placed an emphasis on 'local champions' – women participants who volunteer with the project simply to go out into the community and speak to other women in their own environment for example in salons, cafes and primary schools. The project finds that when another type of session starts, or at a new venue, this is more effective at generating new recruits than the simultaneous marketing 'push' with posters, flyers and social networking, as well as fostering a community spirit.

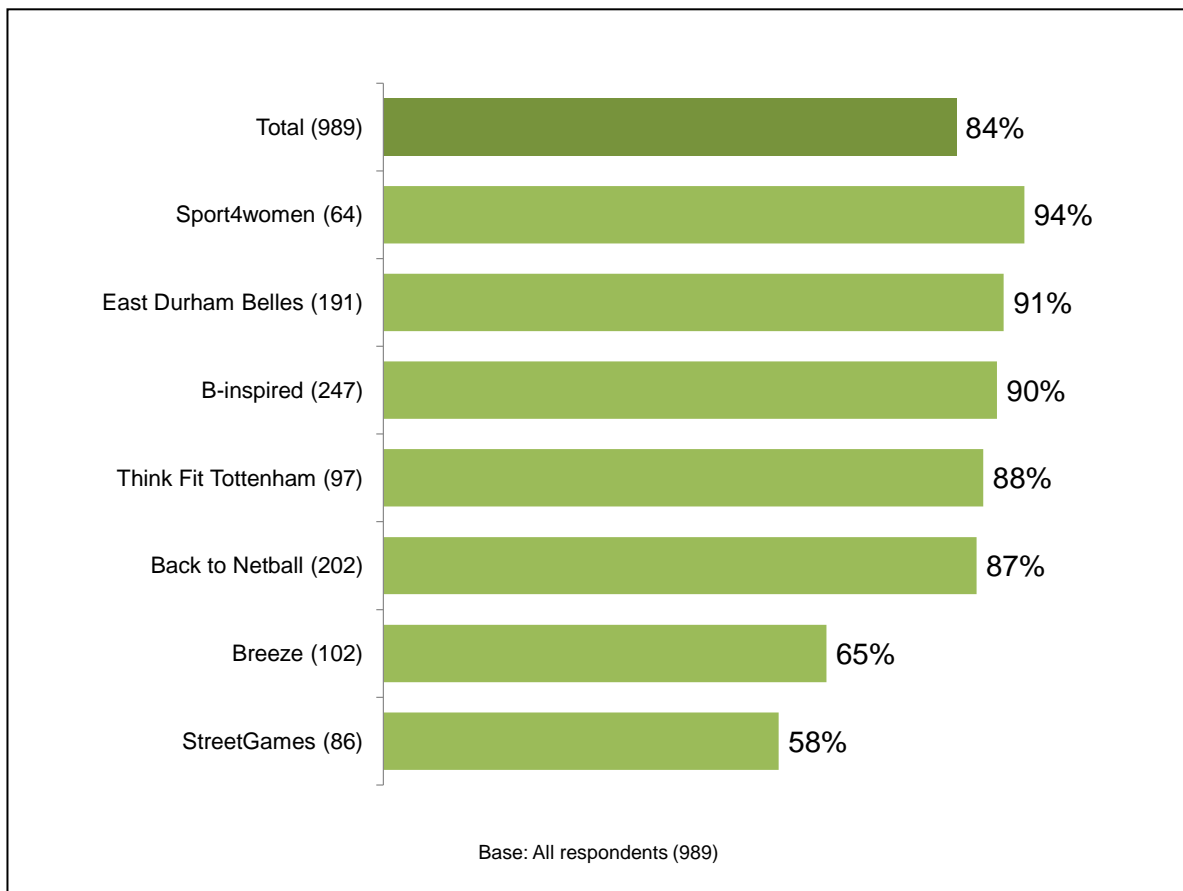
- 5.48 As well as meeting the women involved in delivering and taking part in activity sessions, publicity events are a good way to show the different activities in action with 'real women', to emphasise the fun and sociable nature of the sessions and reduce any anxiety about what the sport will involve or the fitness levels required. To this end, Sport4Women staged mini badminton and basketball matches in school playgrounds and halls to target mums and encourage them to come along and play as a group.



5.49 Other projects mentioned wishing to organise opportunities for people in the community to meet athletes that are local to the area, in order to inspire and encourage those currently living there to get more involved in sport. However, one potential hurdle here cited by Sport4women was that the channels involved in organising visits by athletes meant that the process of obtaining an athlete ambassador for events was more difficult than it had previously been.

“Bring a friend”

5.50 This is something that has been touched on throughout the chapter and is something that seems to have happened across all projects, with 84% of participants in the quantitative survey saying they had recommended the activity sessions to someone they know, and 57% saying they had taken a friend along with them to a session.



5.51 Across projects, high proportions were likely to recommend the project to a friend. However there was some variation. On one project, it was as much as 94%. Indeed, for three out of seven projects it was at least 90%. But on two others projects it was a more modest 58% and 65%. These lower levels of recommendation could be to do with the fact that these projects work on a huge national scale, and so they do not necessarily reap the benefit of the emphasis on the local ‘community’ that the smaller projects have, where closely-knit local groups of women attend and recommend to other local women.

5.52 Women who lived in deprived areas and also cared for children were particularly likely to have recommended the project to someone else (91% compared to 84% overall), suggesting the sessions have a particularly positive impact on women in this group.



- 5.53 When it came to bringing others along to sessions, participants on one project were particularly likely to have done this (70%). This supports the project leader's assertion that the community local to the project is quite tightly knit.
- 5.54 Again, women attending the national scale projects were the least likely to have brought others along to project sessions with them. But it is still positive that on one of these national projects, one quarter of participants have actually brought someone else along to sessions.
- 5.55 Muslim women, and those living in deprived areas were particularly likely to have brought someone else along to the sessions (64% Muslim and 63% deprived compared to 57% overall).
- 5.56 This supports the assertion by project staff and volunteers that a number of their participants are recruited when women bring their friends, family members and colleagues along to activity sessions. Therefore overtly encouraging present participants to recruit their friends, family members, neighbours or colleagues could be a particularly effective way of increasing participant numbers. Some projects, for example Sport4Women, cite this aspect of the project as being particularly successful; a coach at this project gave the positive example that after encouragement from the coach to bring members of her family with her, a Bangladeshi woman started to bring both her mother and her mother-in-law to sessions with her – something quite unusual in Bangladeshi culture.
- 5.57 East Durham Belles found that being accompanied by a friend is almost essential for younger women to attend for the first time. The project lead commented there is apathy in the area among younger women (under 24s) that is not seen among older age groups. Younger women who do attend are particularly encouraged to bring their friends along.

Using public / national events as 'springboards' for increased recruitment

- 5.58 Some projects found recruitment was particularly successful when marketing campaigns were built around public or national events or holidays, to create the feeling that 'everyone' is getting involved.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS**

A particularly good example was Back to Netball's social media campaign on New Years' Resolutions which resulted in a huge increase in participants.

- 5.59 Use of the Olympics as a marketing 'hook' to increase local interest in sport was something considered by Back to Netball which met with some interest, although the project did report that the level of engagement with the Olympics, particularly within the target groups, was low. Interviews with participants confirmed the same thing, that while some were excited about the Olympics, almost none felt more inclined to take part in sport as a result.
- 5.60 Sport4Women reported that Ramadan creates a barrier to taking part in sporting activity for the large Muslim community in Tower Hamlets, and that the Olympics coinciding with this period means Olympics-related marketing is likely to be particularly ineffective within the project's local community.

Promoting the projects more widely

- 5.61 Both participants and project staff feel that as well as 'personal' promotion, better 'paper' promotion of the sessions was crucial to getting more women attending. As shown in Figure 5.1, leaflets and posters did raise the awareness of some women (15% heard about the project through a leaflet and



11% through a poster), but some women had only heard about the project through word of mouth and had seen no publicity at all, while from the qualitative research it was clear that other women had only seen posters or leaflets at the gym (rather than in non-sporting community locations).

*'People who don't visit the leisure centre aren't going to see the advert or poster. I've never seen the poster anywhere else. They need to advertise more widely.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Deprived – Think Fit)

5.62 Both participants and project staff felt this could be a particular barrier to recruitment. One project acknowledged that following on from making the marketing materials effective, getting them out of leisure centres and into the community was the next step. They also wanted to make more use of social media to aid recruitment, particularly for the younger age groups which appeared relatively hard to reach.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS**

Staff from one project commented that they are putting far more emphasis on marketing than originally anticipated, with each coach now required to diarise at least 5 hours a week on marketing such as posting flyers, writing social media articles and blogs, and updating their section of social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter twice a day with photos of recent sessions and news on upcoming sessions, to ensure there is always something recent for potential participants to see.

5.63 Staff and volunteers from Sport4Women also commented that getting marketing out to all the women they want to reach, particularly disadvantaged and Muslim women, is difficult. At present the majority of their poster and leaflet promotion occurs around the leisure centres where the Active Women sessions are held (the project lead cited that the busier leisure centre venue was not surprisingly the more effective in terms of recruiting), and getting the word out into the community is a priority. In addition, some staff and participants mentioned that the posters / leaflets are generic and so do not offer any information on session times or locations, however the project lead stressed this means the materials do not have to be reprinted when changes occur, and that the more detailed information is available on the website. Evidently there is a balance to be struck between keeping costs down and providing up-front information that will encourage women to participate for the first time.

Providing more practical information

5.64 Women feeling uneasy about going to a session for the first time could also benefit from being given more practical information about what sessions might entail. Several women commented that while they had no specific anxieties about taking part, they were also unsure what the sessions would involve, what else was available and when. Providing a short leaflet or email in advance of attending a session (ideally handed out in person by a project rep or emailed afterwards, or provided alongside any posters) may help 'warm up' women so that going to a session for the first time does not feel too daunting. Interviews with participants suggested that some projects are doing this already by sending emails, calling or texting potential participants to provide session times and other information - this was particularly mentioned by participants of East Durham Belles, Breeze and B-inspired.

5.65 In a similar vein, it is important that any leisure centre staff know enough about the project to be able to provide this kind of information to any women who visit or call to make further enquiries after seeing a poster or a leaflet, or speaking to a rep. Ill-informed (or unenthusiastic) front line staff could mean a



hesitant woman does not attempt to find out anything further. For sessions run in local leisure centres, some qualitative interviews with participants highlighted the need for participants to be supported in the critical phase between them showing an interest and attending their first session:

*'It would have been good if the receptionist had been better informed, or if there was a leaflet.'*

(25 – 34, No child caring responsibilities, Deprived)

*'I wished I had more information about what it was all about, just to know what to expect - would have reduced the anxiety a bit.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Deprivation unknown)

5.66 To counter this, one project briefed all front-line leisure centre staff so they are able to answer questions and provide information about the project if people enquire. In addition, one female member of staff is appointed a 'lead' in each of the leisure centres in order to generate interest amongst women who go to the leisure centre for other kinds of activities.

#### Partnership working

5.67 One important aspect of the Active Women Programme is the projects' ability and proclivity to make connections with 'partner' organisations in the community.

5.68 As discussed in Chapter 4, partnership working is beneficial for projects for many wider reasons such as sharing expertise and resources such as equipment, coaches and venues, but has a particularly beneficial role to play in effective recruitment of target women. This is because women can be targeted through organisations that they are already members of, so that information and encouragement comes from a source they feel comfortable with. In addition, if women are informed about the programme sessions while they are with other women that they know, it makes it more likely they will encourage each other, and accompany each other, to activity sessions. Women who went along to their first session with someone else often reported feeling glad that they went with someone they already knew.

5.69 There are several examples of partnership working and how this has helped projects recruit.

5.70 Some projects, for example East Durham Belles and Sport4Women, found that working in close partnership with local leisure centres where some sessions are held, means that both the project and the leisure centre benefits.

#### GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

An example of this is 'Ladies' Days' which are organised by East Durham Belles and hosted by the local leisure centre. These work like 'open days' where women can come and meet other women and coaches, pick up leaflets, have a look at the leisure centre and are offered refreshments. Previously the leisure centre had been relatively empty between 9am – 5pm, and in addition the project's first 'Ladies Days' (held elsewhere initially) were not very busy. Combining the two meant the Leisure centre gained many extra customers (many decided to try out other facilities while they were there) and the project's open days were far more popular and resulted in more recruits. The combination worked so well that the Leisure Centre manager stopped charging the project for the use of the room, and the centre is now used far more by other organisations in the community.





- 5.71 In a similarly practical vein, B-inspired teamed up with the local council in order to provide a far greater pool of bikes and instructors than they had access to previously, meaning the project became able to recruit and accommodate larger numbers.
- 5.72 National partners can also be help raise the profile of smaller projects – for example, Think Fit found that they have benefited from the branding of national partners like Badminton ‘No Strings’ and ‘Run England’, meaning that the project has become noticed (and trusted) by a far larger pool of potential new recruits.
- 5.73 Partnership working can also help particularly the ‘disadvantaged’ target group, as projects have commented that disadvantaged communities can be quite ‘closed’ and hence engaging women from these communities can be difficult to reach, although on the whole partnerships are being used to boost overall participant numbers, rather than key target group numbers.
- 5.74 As noted in Chapter 4, Sport4Women have trained women from the Muslim Women’s Collective as coaches. This has subsequently encouraged more Muslim women to attend sessions.

*‘The female Muslim coaches that we’ve got have naturally attracted other Muslim ladies, whereas the white coaches have attracted younger girls from school, or working women.’*

(Project lead – Sport4Women)

#### Mythbusting

- 5.75 As previously mentioned, women can feel nervous about going to an activity session for the first time. Sometimes this is due to a general wariness of new situations and unfamiliar people. However sometimes there are specific concerns that could potentially stop women from attending a session for the first time, but that could also be relatively easily allayed with knowledge of the concern and sensitive marketing. Projects could consider emphasising the following to potential participants:
- Many will be total beginners and it doesn’t matter if you have never taken part in the particular sport before or if you are very unfit
  - It doesn’t matter what age, size or shape you are, sport can still be fun
- 5.76 A few examples cited included Back to Netball’s posters showing that you do not have to be particularly young or fit to enjoy playing netball and that women are not expected to wear gym skirts (to counteract women’s potential recollections of the sport from school).
- 5.77 Another example is East Durham Belles’ focus on ‘real’ women making sure posters show normal looking women taking part, coached by normal looking women, rather than particularly slender or muscular women.

*‘Women could be nervous about joining in. You see images of the perfect body and that can be off putting. They have to advertise it for normal people and stress how their fitness and health levels will improve.’*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – East Durham Belles)

- 5.78 It could be useful for projects to really engage with their current participants (particularly those who fall into the ‘target’ groups of the programme – disadvantaged women and women caring for children) and



find out what kinds of specific preconceptions (and potential misconceptions) existed before they attended their first session. This knowledge could then be used to build on existing marketing and increase the appeal of the sessions to the target audience by reducing any initial reticence as far as possible.

Participant story highlighting recruitment issues: Alexandra

5.79 The following portrait tells the story of one participant’s experience of their Active Women project, illustrating issues relating to recruitment. Similar portraits are also included at the end of the next two chapters, focussing on retention and impact respectively.

**PARTICIPANT STORY: ALEXANDRA**

Alexandra, aged 35 to 44, started attending Active Women sessions in February 2012.

She first heard about the project from a friend. Being able to bring her daughter to the swim sessions really appealed as there was no need to worry about childcare. At the time she was looking to take part in exercise; she wanted to get back into shape after having her daughter and wanted to meet new people.

Initially she was quite nervous about attending: she was worried about not knowing people and getting into a swimming costume in public. Getting a phone call from the project co-ordinator however really helped her to decide to take part. The co-ordinator reassured her, talking her through what the sessions would involve.

*‘It was specific to women; this was a major fact. Mixed sessions can be*

*intimidating. I felt more comfortable with women who were in a similar situation to me. Socially it was also a supportive environment.’*

Alexandra is doubtful whether she would have taken part in sport or exercise if it hadn’t been for East Durham Belles. She is a more confident swimmer as a result of taking part and has a greater sense of emotional wellbeing. Her enjoyment of the sessions is clear; she has encouraged other friends, and her partner, to attend.

Unfortunately she has had to temporarily stop attending because of a foot injury. But the project has been touch to see if they could help; indeed they have put the session fees on hold until she returns.

*‘If I hadn’t had this contact I probably wouldn’t have wanted to, or even thought about going back. This was reassuring and gave me confidence.’*



## Participant story highlighting recruitment issues: Mia

**PARTICIPANT STORY: MIA**

Mia, aged 25 – 34 and with two children in nursery, started attending Active Women sessions in October 2011. She went along to four sessions before dropping out.

A poster in the local leisure centre, about Badminton 'No Strings' women only sessions, sparked her interest. The sessions were in the morning, which worked well with her children's nursery schedule. It also sounded fun and unthreatening, being women only.

On a practical level it was easy to attend the first session, she just rang the contact number on the poster and went along the following week; this was the only contact she had with the project prior to attending. She did have some reservations about attending because of her fitness level, so more contact from the project prior to attending would have been good.

*'I went with a friend and we were both unfit. It was a bit scary to see what would happen, if we were going to play, if we would be welcomed.'*

She found the sessions to be fun and good exercise. While some of the sessions could have done with a bit more structure, as sometimes she felt like she was standing around doing nothing, overall her experience was positive.

One barrier to continuing attending was not having a badminton partner. When the friend she originally went with stopped going she found it difficult as everyone else was paired up.

*'When my friend stopped going, and I carried on, I was stopping everyone else from playing...so I just thought I'd stop. The coach would play with me for a bit, but obviously she had other things to do as well.'*

But the primary barrier to her continuing to attendance was inadequate childcare facilities at the leisure centre. The badminton sessions lasted two hours, but she was only able to use the crèche for one hour. Furthermore, her daughter didn't particularly like the crèche.

Mia is keen to go back but she needs to find a new crèche first.





## 6 Retention of women on the Active Women Programme

### Summary

- 6.1 Projects are achieving varying levels of success in retaining participants. Overall, a slight majority of participants surveyed were still attending Active Women sessions at the time they completed the survey. However, across projects there were women who considered themselves to still be attending even though they had not attended in the last three months, and significant minorities who had stopped attending sessions.
- 6.2 Crucial to successfully retaining participants is addressing both *enablers* and *encouragers* of attendance.
- *'Enablers'* include convenient session times, accessible venue locations, childcare facilities, flexible drop-in sessions and affordable prices. These minimise potential barriers to attendance, making it feasible for women to attend in the first place, and on a frequent basis.
  - *'Encouragers'* include frequent contact from project staff, social oriented, fun and non-competitive sessions, competent coaches and incentives. These can be used alongside enablers to persuade women to keep attending.
- 6.3 In terms of enablers, the following have been particularly effective and should be utilised by all projects as they move forward:
- Running morning sessions to meet the needs of women with child caring responsibilities
  - Monitoring the popularity of session times so timings can be adjusted to better meet women's needs
  - Offering childcare facilities in partnership with other local organisations
  - Choosing venues that are within walking distance and / or offering a project-run bus service, to and from venues
- 6.4 The following encouragers have also been used with success, and should be considered by all projects as possible tools for retaining participants:
- Regular email updates from project staff
  - Follow-up contact and updates from project staff to women who have left a project
  - Sessions designed as social events
  - Induction training for coaches
- 6.5 Training for coaches in both 'hard' and 'soft' skills is an area that needs particular consideration across projects. Incentives, for both participants and volunteers, should also be considered as so far these have been overlooked by some projects as a tool for retaining women.



## Introduction

- 6.6 Chapter 3 has already shown that while projects are on track with recruiting their target number of participants, at least at an overall level, throughput figures (i.e. the number of attendances made by each participant) are much lower than targeted. This suggests that so far projects have struggled somewhat to maintain attendance among participants.
- 6.7 Sustained participation is key to the objectives of the Active Women Programme as it is this that will generate greater health and other medium or long term impacts, rather than solitary attendances at one-off events.
- 6.8 This chapter explores issues relating to retaining participants, and how to enable and encourage them to keep coming back to sessions. The chapter presents the participant perspective (drawing on both survey data and qualitative interviews) on this issue; considering their reasons for continuing to attend Active Women sessions as well as their reasons for dropping out, where they have done so. The chapter also draws on interviews with project staff and partners to provide further evidence on what works in terms of retaining participants over time.

## Drop-out rates and patterns

- 6.9 Around three in five participants (61%) considered themselves to be still attending Active Women sessions at the time of the survey, the majority of which (87%, equating to 53% of participants overall) had taken part in a session reasonably recently, less than three months before the survey interview. However over a third (36%) had stopped attending Active Women sessions altogether by the time of the survey interview, and a further 7% had not attended for three months or more.
- 6.10 It should also be noted that on a couple of projects, a relatively high proportion of respondents who considered themselves to still be attending (10-12%) had not in fact attended a session for at least three months. They may be more accurately thought of as 'lapsed'.
- 6.11 Almost two thirds (63%) of participants who started attending sessions before April 2011 were still attending at the time of the survey at least a year later. This compares favourably to participants who joined between July and September 2011 who were least likely to still to be attending Active Women sessions (54%). This perhaps reflects a greater number of one-off events being run over the summer months which were less likely to result in longer term attendances.
- 6.12 The majority (80%) of participants who considered themselves to be still attending Active Women sessions reported finding it easy to keep attending (further exploration of reasons why participants find it easy or difficult to keep attending are discussed later in this chapter). This suggests that projects have had some success in facilitating ongoing attendance at their sessions.
- 6.13 However, as discussed above, a notable minority were no longer attending Active Women sessions (36%) by the time of the survey interview. It would appear that participants who stopped attending Active Women sessions chose to do so soon after joining. Two-thirds (67%) of participants that had stopped attending Active Women sessions said that they had attended for three months or fewer before dropping out while a further one in six (16%) attended for four to six months.
- 6.14 Around a quarter (26%) had intended to go for a certain length of time, or on an ongoing basis, but stopped earlier than they expected, while over half (55%) had just gone along to give the sessions a try and had no expectation of attending further sessions.
- 6.15 This suggests that participants are perhaps most 'at risk' of dropping out in the early stages of their participation rather than after they have been attending for a longer period of time.

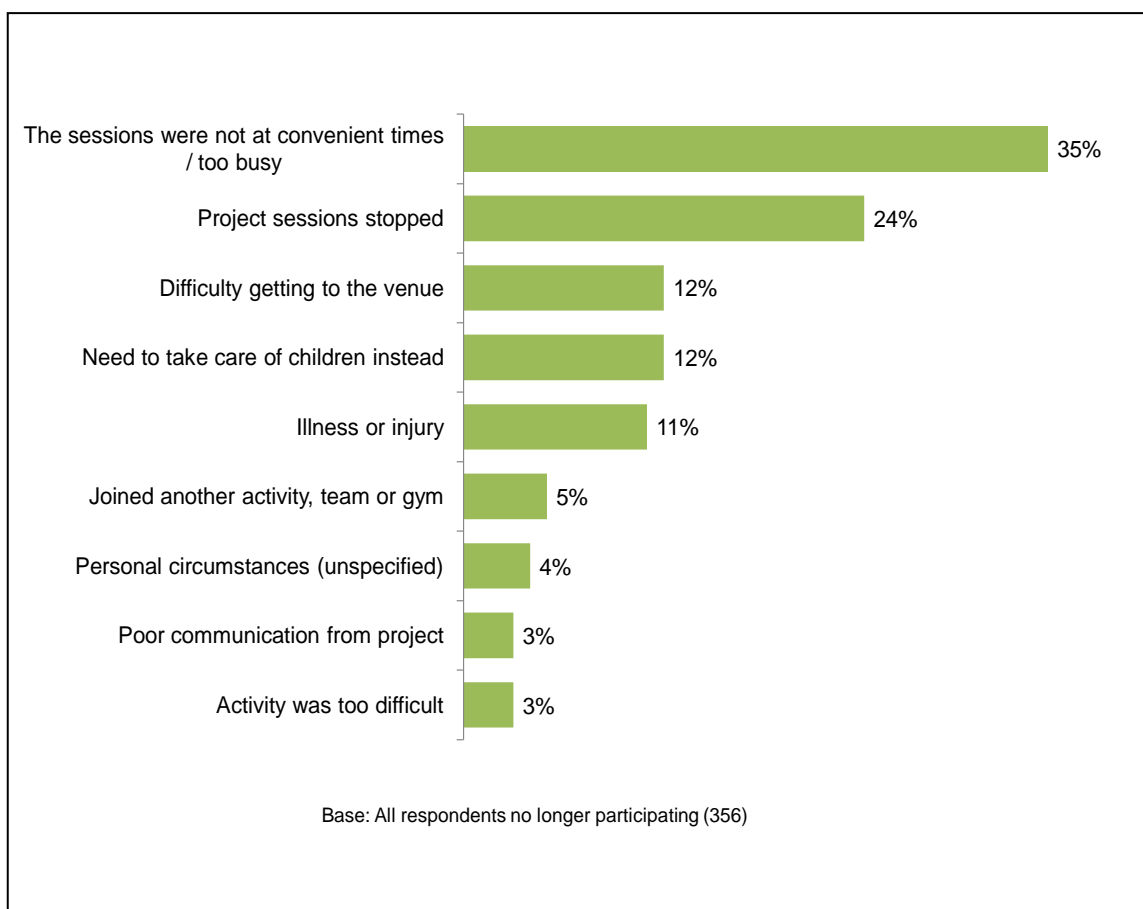


- 6.16 Findings from both the survey and qualitative interviews also suggest that projects may have focussed on running one-off mass participation or stand-alone sessions without fully maximising the potential to translate attendances at these into longer term attendance. In some projects there may not have been regular sessions to signpost attendees to. Indeed, a quarter (24%) of respondents who were no longer attending Active Women sessions at the time of the survey interview reported that this was because the sessions had stopped. Evidence from project staff suggests this may have been because not enough funding was available to allow sessions to continue sustainably, and/or because they had run a one-off event. However, the fact that a quarter of those who were no longer attending had stopped because there were no sessions for them to go to suggests a missed opportunity for some projects in retaining women.
- 6.17 Among those that had already stopped attending Active Women sessions by the time of the survey interview, participants from a deprived area had attended for a shorter amount of time before dropping out than others (74% of participants who lived in a deprived area attended for three months or less compared with 61% of participants who did not live in a deprived area). While this may reflect the pattern of delivery by different projects (as some deliver to a higher proportion of deprived participants than others), there is some suggestion that this target group of participants may require additional support in maintaining their attendance at sessions in the first few months.

#### Reasons for dropping out of sessions

- 6.18 Survey participants gave a range of reasons for dropping out of Active Women sessions. The most common reason given related to the timing of the sessions. The sessions were either not scheduled at convenient times for participants or a change in work commitments for example meant respondents were too busy to attend (35%).
- 6.19 Other frequently reported reasons for stopping included the project sessions stopping (24%), difficulty getting to the venue and a need to take care of children instead (both 12%). Illness or injury was also a commonly cited reason (11%). Figure 6.1 presents the main reasons respondents gave for no longer attending Active Women sessions.



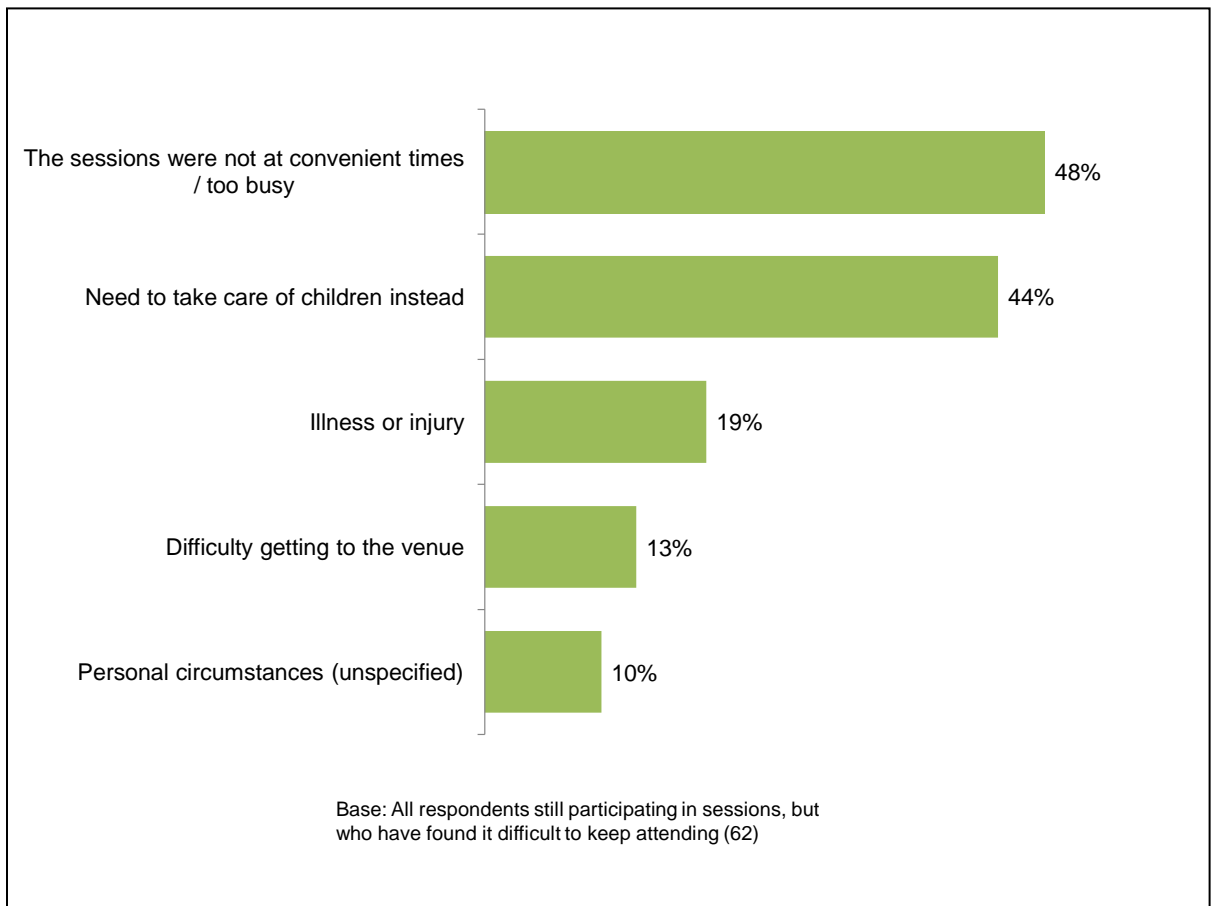
**Figure 6.1: Reasons for no longer taking part in Active Women project sessions**

### Ease in attending sessions

- 6.20 Participants who were still attending Active Women sessions at the time of the study were asked how easy or difficult they found it to keep attending. The majority of participants (80%) reported that they found it easy to keep attending, including 38% who stated that they found it very easy to keep attending. One in ten (10%) found it difficult to keep attending, including only 1% who reported that they found it very difficult.
- 6.21 There were also some significant differences by demographics. Women who cared for children under the age of 16 were more likely to find it difficult to keep attending (12% vs. 8% of those without children under 16) and both younger participants (aged 16 to 24) and Muslim participants were less likely to report finding it very easy to keep attending sessions (28% and 34% respectively compared to 38% overall).
- 6.22 Respondents who reported that they found it difficult to keep attending Active Women sessions were asked to explain their reasons for this. The reasons given for missing sessions follow a similar pattern to those given for stopping attending altogether, both (see Figure 6.2). Clearly participants who find it difficult to attend some sessions are at high risk of dropping out. It is therefore important to address occasional barriers to participation before they become permanent barriers to participation.

6.23 Sessions being at inconvenient times or being too busy was the most common reason for participants finding it difficult to keep attending (48%), while the need to take care of children instead was also a common response (44%). It is interesting to note that a far higher proportion of participants cited childcare issues here than when reporting on reasons for no longer attending Active Women sessions. This would suggest that while childcare issues hinder certain participants' ability to attend sessions, it is less likely to lead to them actually dropping out and may be an issue that many are able to overcome.

**Figure 6.2: Reasons for difficulty in attending Active Women sessions**

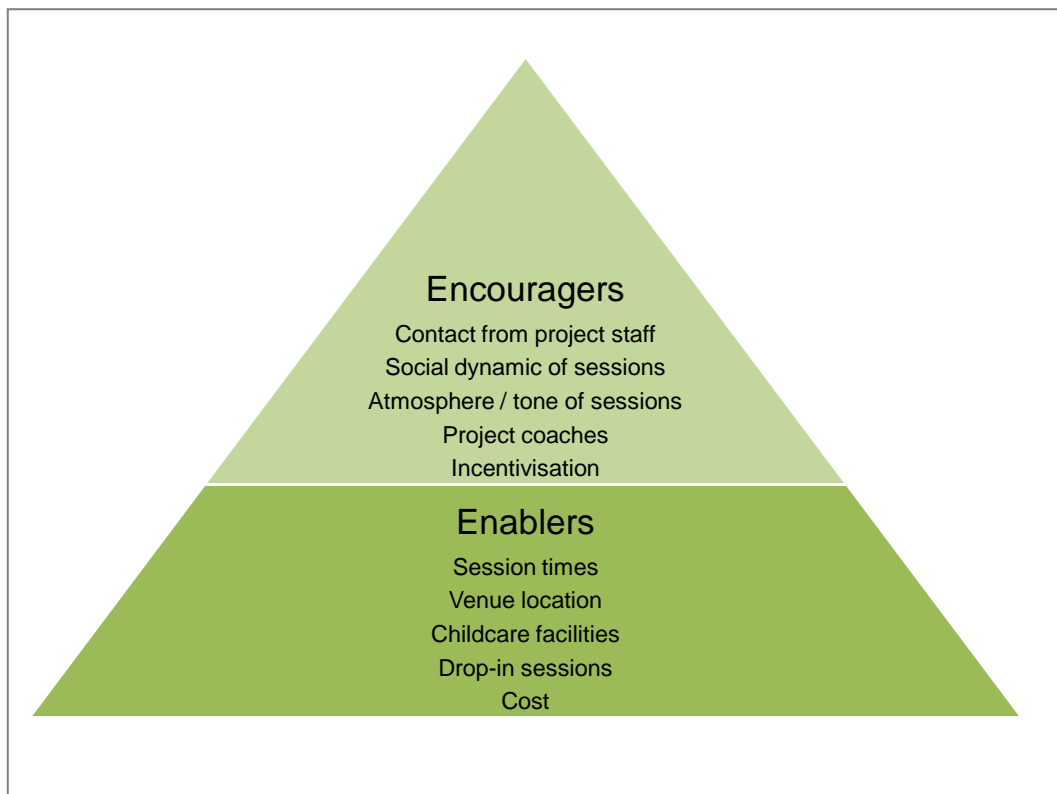


**Enablers and encouragers**

6.24 Analysis suggests that retaining participants can be viewed as a two-tier relationship between **enablers** and **encouragers** of attendance (Figure 6.3). Both qualitative and quantitative data highlighted factors that can minimise or remove barriers to attendance, *enabling* women to attend on an on-going basis — namely venue locations, session times, childcare facilities, offering drop-in sessions and cost. A number of further factors - namely contact from project staff, the social dynamic of sessions, atmosphere/tone of sessions, quality of project coaches and incentivisation - can be then be used to motivate and *encourage* participants to keep attending.





**Figure 6.3: Enablers and encouragers of attendance**

6.25 The remainder of this chapter explores each of these factors in more detail, commenting on the extent to which, Active Women projects have successfully *enabled* and *encouraged* attendance. Examples of 'good practice' in these areas identified by the research will also be highlighted.

#### Enablers of attendance

6.26 Some of the reasons cited by participants for stopping attending or missing sessions cannot be addressed by project staff, such as illness or injury amongst participants. But the qualitative research has revealed that the majority of reasons cited for non-attendance can be addressed by projects through considering:

- Session times
- Venue locations
- Childcare facilities
- Drop-in sessions
- Cost

6.27 The relative importance of each of these factors in enabling attendance and the ways in which projects are tackling them are considered below in turn.

#### Session times

6.28 Qualitative interviews with participants and project staff clearly indicated that women who attend Active Women sessions had work commitments, family responsibilities, or both. Each participant had a distinct set of demands on their time and restrictions on when they could and could not attend a

session. Situations also tended to change; for example, women who were originally able to attend morning sessions while on maternity leave were no longer able to when they returned to work. In this context, deciding on the most appropriate timings for project sessions is clearly a challenge.

6.29 As reported above, survey data reported that a key reason for dropping out of Active Women sessions was that sessions were not at convenient times or being too busy to attend. The evidence illustrates the importance of getting the timings right.

6.30 There was some suggestion that projects tended to be more likely to struggle to meet the needs of women who work, or whose situations changed.

*'They are all convenient – the times of the sessions take into consideration what suits parents.'*

(45 – 54, Child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – Sport4Women)

*'I am going to go back to work part-time and it may end up clashing. If they had a morning and afternoon session then you would have a choice, maybe an evening session, then you could say to your partner 'you look after the kids I'm going to do sport''*

(35 – 44, Child caring responsibilities, Deprived)

6.31 Offering a greater choice of session times, where it is cost-effective, may be one way to address the more complex issue of shifting work and family responsibilities. Indeed in the quantitative survey, when respondents were asked how their Active Women project could be improved, 7% spontaneously said they would like a greater variety of session times, the second most common suggestion. A further 6% said they would like there to be more sessions offered every week while 5% suggested more evening sessions to improve convenience.

*'It was happening once a week. But the availability wasn't great; I wasn't always able to go. They could do with more sessions.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Not deprived)

6.32 To a certain extent, projects have been restricted in the number of sessions they can offer. It would not be cost-effective, or sustainable, to offer sessions which met the needs of only a handful of participants.

*'We have to run sessions where we think we can make it work. And that might happen to be the time when someone can't do it. We ring them up in advance of sessions and make a note of when they would like to do it. But if you have 20 people, and 15 of them can do it on a Tuesday, then you have to do it then.'*

(Coach – B-inspired Women)

6.33 Interviews with staff highlight that many projects operate with a limited team; most staff are employed part-time and the volunteer base is still limited. Part-time coaches cannot be so flexible in their working hours and there aren't necessarily volunteers to fill the gap. Think Fit, for example, has just one full-time member of staff, the project lead; the rest of the team — two casual coaches, one development coach — are employed part-time.

*'Volunteer time started in Sept/Oct, so we're still quite new... I've got a new volunteer starting at another session next week. But in terms of volunteer time from the ladies themselves it's kind of just been for events and one off things. More long-term volunteering will come as the programme develops'*

(Project lead – Think Fit)



- 6.34 Yet, many projects, including staff on Think Fit, Back to Netball and Sport4Women, mentioned making adjustments to session timings because of low attendance. Think Fit was one example of a project taking this responsive approach.

*'Initially, we listened to need and demand and put sessions on at certain times of day. But ladies weren't coming, so we had to dig deeper and find out more, get more of a feel for why they weren't coming. Now all my sessions are first thing in the morning after they drop the kids off at school, between 9 and 9.30, or evening. I had afternoon sessions but they just didn't work.'*

(Project lead – Think Fit)

- 6.35 Some projects also mentioned trialling sessions first before deciding to run them on a permanent basis.

*'We've got one session that we are trialling, a netball session with thirteen to nineteen year olds... We will hopefully be trialling a pilot of Swim Sports that we can introduce soon.'*

(Project lead – Sport4Women)

- 6.36 Evidently there is an element of trial and error, as well as a strong need to listen and respond to participant demands. Taking a responsive approach, speaking and listening to women about their availability and preferences, could enable them to attend on a more frequent basis and ultimately reduce the risk of women leaving the project altogether.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

Sport4Women has focused on running sessions that suit the needs of women with child caring responsibilities, by running sessions in the morning after women have dropped their children at school.

By monitoring which times are most popular, and listening to women about when they would like sessions to run, Think Fit has been able to adjust the timing of sessions so they better suit women's shifting schedules.

**Childcare facilities**

- 6.37 The quantitative survey revealed that participants were not wholly positive about the childcare available. Just over half (54%) of those for whom the question was relevant agreed that the childcare available met their needs (42% strongly agreed), suggesting that there is room for improvement among projects to improve the childcare available at sessions.<sup>6</sup>

- 6.38 Indications of not being entirely happy with the childcare available also emerged during some of the qualitative interviews with participants. It was an issue that made it difficult for some participants to keep attending:

*'I could only attend for one of the two hours as they only take kids in the crèche for one hour, as my child was only 1 year old. My daughter wasn't enjoying it enough either. She didn't like it there.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Deprived – Think Fit)

<sup>6</sup> These figures are based on 279 participants, removing those who reported that this statement did not apply to them.



- 6.39 But interviews with project staff also highlighted that some projects have been restricted in the childcare facilities they can offer because of limited funding and resources. While some projects have been resourceful, making links with local children’s centres and Sure Start, this has been with mixed success. Budget cuts are partly to blame.

*‘Because of budget freezes and budget cuts, all of the crèches in the local authority facilities have gone, and the Sure Start centres don’t have extra money to put on those sessions that we wanted them... We have managed to put something in place to alleviate that. I have been in contact with a couple of charities that deliver the outsourcing of a mobile crèche. It was about 2 weeks ago that I managed to broker that partnership.’*

(Project lead – B-inspired)

- 6.40 Staff from some projects would like to offer crèches and were aware of their potential value in recruiting and retaining participants, but cost was often cited as a barrier here:

*‘Crèches do attract new participants especially for the ladies day [drop in events], but it costs a lot of money... it is definitely a hook to get ladies in but I couldn’t put one on every week for one activity and then have only two children.’*

(Project lead – East Durham Belles)

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

B-Active has been creative in sourcing childcare facilities for women, broking partnerships with local charities so they can provide a mobile crèche. Being persistent and resourceful is important in a context of budget cuts and freezes.

It is also important to continue to assess the quality of childcare provision. This could be assessed by collecting formal or informal feedback from participants.

**Convenient venue locations**

- 6.41 Venue locations were inconvenient if getting to a session became costly in terms of time or money i.e. if it took a long time for participants to travel to and from a session or was expensive because of having to drive or take public transport, the venue location became a potential barrier to continuing participation. The quantitative survey with participants revealed that the fourth most common suggestion for improvement was to make the sessions more local (7% spontaneously suggested this).

- 6.42 For some Back to Netball participants, a project with a large catchment area, the commute was cited as a reason that made sessions difficult to attend. Work commitments, combined with a commute, had led to some participants dropping out. Still, face-to-face interviews with participants indicated that Back to Netball had taken steps to address this by providing a bus service specifically for participants who had further to travel.

*‘If you live far away they will drop you home in a bus. They encourage you to be on time.’*

(45 – 54, Child caring responsibilities, Deprived – Back to Netball)

- 6.43 As staff across projects pointed out, the cost and frequency of public transport was also a barrier to some participants attending regularly. Even where public transport was available, the service was not



necessarily regular or frequent enough to plan session around. This put these participants at high risk of dropping out of the project.

*'There is a lot of unemployment and if there is a nominal charge for transport some people can't afford this. Our buses are appalling. The barrier is access to the centres.'*

(Coach – East Durham Belles)

- 6.44 Think Fit was rated positively by participants for its choice of venues. Venues are often within walking distance of local schools, which is convenient for women who have just dropped their children off. Generally speaking the venues are within walking distance or on local bus routes. It is a good example of a project that has put effort into choosing venues locations that minimise the time and monetary cost of attending.

*'Accessibility, getting to them, is an additional barrier...is it on a bus route, can they walk there? You've got to really think about these things.'*

(Project lead – Think Fit)

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

Back to Netball acknowledged that venues which are far away, or costly to get to, can be a barrier to attending sessions. Thus they have provided a bus service for women who don't live nearby. Participants mentioned this service as a benefit of Back to Netball sessions; it makes attendance easier.

Think Fit takes a slightly different approach, seeking out venues that are within walking distance or on a regular bus route. Again, this has made it easier for more women to attend

**Drop-in sessions**

- 6.45 Projects tended to run sessions on a drop-in basis: in the quantitative survey just over half (54%) of participants reported that they dropped in without signing up while just under a quarter (23%) said that they signed up for a course of sessions.

- 6.46 Across projects, women cited the drop-in nature of their sessions as a factor that made attending sessions easier; they didn't have to commit a lot of time or money in advance.

*'The appeal of No Strings Badmintons was that it was a drop-in thing where you haven't got that huge commitment because people are busy and things do turn up. I think having something where they are quite happy for you come along if you are available appeals.'*

(55+, No child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – Think Fit)

- 6.47 Drop-in sessions were more common on some projects than others, with 82% of participants at one project attending on a drop-in basis compared to just 21% at another project. It is interesting that among those still attending sessions at the time of the survey interview, more participants at the former project found it easy to keep attending sessions. Drop-in sessions seem to make attendance easier.



- 6.48 At one project women sign up for individual sessions in advance, which allows a degree of flexibility as women don't need to sign up for a block but does not offer the full flexibility of a pure drop-in approach. For outdoor sessions, signing up in advance isn't always seen as ideal if the weather is poor. Having to book sessions in this way may have been putting off some women from continuing to attend.

*'I sign up two weeks before. But I missed one because I was too tired and some in April because of poor weather.'*

(45 – 54, No child caring responsibilities, Not deprived)

- 6.49 Flexible sessions with minimal commitment were crucial to retaining participants for the additional reason that while some women might have been willing to sign up for a block of sessions once, they might not have been willing to do so a subsequent time because of the time or cost.
- 6.50 The quantitative survey confirmed that drop-in sessions enabled women to keep attending Active Women sessions. Of those participants who considered themselves to still be attending, six in ten (59%) attended on a drop-in basis while this proportion was just less than half (48%) among those participants who were no longer attending. This is perhaps surprising given that drop-in events also involved one-off mass participation events where projects struggled to encourage attendants to try other, more long-term sessions and highlights to an even greater extent the fact that participants far preferred drop-in sessions.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

Drop-in sessions made it easier for women to keep attending. Such sessions have allowed women a degree of flexibility and meant that they have not had to commit time or money upfront.

This flexibility is important. Signing up in advance hasn't always provided sufficient flexibility as women mentioned not being able to go because of urgent family commitments, or not wanting to go because of poor weather.

**Cost**

- 6.51 All projects aimed to keep the cost of attending a session as low as possible, from free to a couple of pounds. Projects recognised that cost was a big barrier to participation for a lot of women.

*'Where possible, if we're targeting Mum in particular, we try to keep things cost neutral. We like to make a profit but try to keep costs as low as possible. In deprived areas, we know costs are a barrier to participation, so that's why we have the funding in there.'*

(Project lead – Back to Netball)

- 6.52 The sports and activities on offer would not be affordable to many women if they were charged at the going rate. Projects were not just retaining women because the sessions were affordable, but because they were offering sports and activities that many women would be unable to access otherwise. This gave Active Women projects a competitive edge over other activity and sport sessions on offer.



*'I wouldn't have played badminton [if these sessions had not been available]. It would have been far too expensive. I wouldn't have been playing as much sport.'*

(35 – 44, Child caring responsibilities, Deprivation unknown – Sport4Women)

6.53 An affordable rate is one that women could pay on a regular basis, at least once a week. Survey data indicates sessions across projects are seen as affordable; only 2% of respondents spontaneously mentioned they would prefer cheaper sessions.

#### Encouragers of attendance

6.54 Alongside the enablers listed above, the qualitative findings suggest that projects should also consider the following factors as important for encouraging continuing attendance:

- Contact from project staff in between sessions
- Social dynamic of sessions
- Atmosphere / tone of sessions
- Project coaches
- Incentives

6.55 Each of these factors are discussed in turn below.

#### Contact from project staff

6.56 Ongoing contact from staff was important to participants, whether by telephone, e-mail or face-to-face in encouraging them to keep attending. Contact might have involved reminding participants of session times and venues, suggesting other sessions that might be of interest to them, or updating them with project news, all of which could encourage and motivate participants. Face-to-face contact and how well staff communicated with participants during activity sessions was also crucial - this aspect will be examined later in the chapter.

6.57 In terms of communication in between sessions, most projects undertook some form of follow-up correspondence, generally by sending a reminder e-mail or newsletter. But there was a lack of consistency from projects in terms of who was contacted — those who had missed a session, those who had just attended, or both — and how often they were contacted.

6.58 Without a consistent approach some participants, particularly those who needed extra encouragement, could fall through the net and stop attending. As projects grow, and the number of participants increases, it becomes all the more important to ensure a consistent approach is adopted. Some participants explicitly commented on the important role this contact made to their continuing attendance.

*'We get regular e-mails and updates that are encouraging; we are all in the office together so we talk about it but even if you were an individual then this would encourage me to continue.'*

(35 – 44, No child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – Back to Netball)

6.59 Interviews with project staff indicate that staff are, on occasion, not fully aware of the range of sessions their project offers. This is particularly the case with new coaches or volunteers. It seems that more could be done get new coaches and volunteers up to speed on their project. Using staff to sign-post



women to other sessions is an important means of retaining participants. Women can be made aware of sessions that better meet their needs, or of others sessions that interest them.

*'I was aware of the overall aims of the project, what it's about. I was aware of the outcomes/objects. I'm not aware of the target numbers, how many women they want to get involved. I didn't know about the workshops – health and nutrition. I may have been told, but I'm still new to the project.'*

(Casual Coach)

6.60 Follow-up contact from staff when women left a project was mixed; generally the approach was ad hoc and informal. However, such follow-up contact is important. Across all projects, most participants who had left stated an interest in returning to the project if their circumstances changed. Sending these women updates, whether as a monthly e-mail with the latest timetable or a project newsletter, was a means of maintaining their interest in the project and leaving the door open for them to return.

*'Yes, they continue to send me their timetables. I got the last one a month and a half ago. And the lady with the project sends me texts letting me know where they are based in my area. It is good to know that they are still running and that any time I am ready I can go back.'*

(25 – 34, No child caring responsibilities, Deprived – Sport4Women)

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

Back to Netball participants mentioned receiving a good degree of follow-up contact from project staff through regular emails and updates. This contact encouraged women to keep attending.

However not all projects have been consistent in their approach towards contacting participants. Participants on some projects mentioned that email updates weren't very regular. It is important that each project agrees internally about contacting women — who, how and how often. It is also important that follow-up contact is made with participants after they leave a project. As a Sport4Women participant mentioned, follow up contact has enabled her to know that sessions are still running and that the door is open for her to return.

**Social dynamic of sessions**

6.61 Participants broadly divide into two groups: those who attended sessions with existing friends or groups of friends, and those who attended on their own. The latter were more likely to branch out and make new friends at the sessions themselves.

6.62 As noted in the previous chapter, women across projects tended to find it easier to attend in the first place if they went with friends.

6.63 However, in the long run attending with friends could pose a risk to continuing attendance, in cases where these existing friends stopped going and women hadn't made other friends on the project. The social aspect of sport and activity sessions was mentioned by women across projects as crucial to their enjoyment of a session. If women felt they lost some of this because friends stopped attending and they hadn't made other friends on the project, it is understandable that they were more likely to stop attending.





*'If my friends were a bit more active, a bit more supportive, then maybe I would have continued on.'*

(45 – 54, Child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – Sport4Women)

6.64 All projects recognise the importance of making sessions fun and social.

*'It had to be something that was seen as a social event as well...As a model it really did work because it wasn't just people turning up to do an activity, but people meeting other people, to relax, do some exercise, chat about it and then arrange something for the following week.'*

(Centre Manager – East Durham Belles)

6.65 Not all projects however distinguished between women who attended and socialised with existing friends, versus those who socialised outside of these friendship groups. At an overall level, projects were encouraging and creating social opportunities, not just within sessions but outside of the sessions. Often these were sport-based social events – tournaments, taster sessions and workshops. Other opportunities were purely social: Back to Netball, for example, have encouraged Christmas meals / drinks amongst both participants and volunteers. But all projects need to be more actively aware of encouraging women to branch out of existing friendship groups, so that if friends do stop attending, women have other friendship networks to draw on, which will motivate them to keep going.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

All projects recognised the importance of making the sport and activity sessions social. East Durham Belles is a good example: they focused on making sessions 'social events', which put the women at ease and meant that women often made plans with other women to attend the following week. Planning activity sessions so that women have to mix with all women attending, by encouraging women to change teams and partners frequently, for example, is important as it has enabled women to build a support network.

Running social events in conjunction with sport and activity sessions, such as tournaments (Sport4Women) or taster sessions and workshops (Think Fit), provided an additional opportunity for women to build their social networks.

**Atmosphere / tone of sessions**

6.66 Understanding the context of the project and the profile of women in the project catchment area were clearly important for knowing how to set the tone of the sessions. Tailoring sessions is important to retention. The quantitative survey showed that nearly nine in ten participants (89%) agreed that the Active Women sessions were aimed at people like them (72% strongly agreed). There were some differences by participant demographic however: participants aged 35 to 44 were the most likely to agree that sessions seemed aimed at them (94%), whilst those aged 16 to 24 were the least likely to agree (82%). Encouragingly, participants caring for children under the age of 16 were more likely to agree as well (91% compared to 87% of those without).

6.67 While there were no significant differences by religion or ethnicity in the quantitative survey, the appeal of women-only sessions was reported by women across projects, particularly on projects in areas with a high percentage of ethnic minorities.



*'If it was a mixed place, there would probably be fewer Muslim women here. To get involved in active sports you have to take off your attire and get into a comfy outfit. I don't think their religion would allow them to do that if there were men here.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Deprivation unknown – Sport4Women)

*'Muslim women or women generally don't like coming too leisure centres particularly, they feel more comfortable in their own environment...None of this is targeted to Muslim women, but obviously because we are lowering the barrier we put the curtains up in the Sports Hall women are now feeling more comfortable to come and attend the sessions.'*

(Project lead – Sport4Women)

- 6.68 Understanding the profile and needs of participants is an ongoing task, particularly as projects expand and set up new sessions. But as most projects recognise the importance of the context of their participants, and continuously try to understand it, projects have been, intentionally or not, always working on increasing retention rates. For example, Back to Netball recognises that a high proportion of women who have been attending are women with children, so they have been running sessions catered to women and their children.

*'It's good to get parents involved in schools. I've done parent and teacher matches and it's a good way to get them talking and have a little banter and the kids come and watch that. Kids want to get involved and mums ask where their kids can play netball.'*

(Coach – Back to Netball)

- 6.69 Much was also being done by projects generally to set a positive tone and atmosphere for the sessions, a key criterion for this profile of women, who have not traditionally engaged with sport; all projects were praised by participants for running sessions with a fun, non-competitive and social atmosphere.

- 6.70 Across projects in the quantitative survey, women agreed that they felt comfortable in the place where sessions were held (96% agreed; 86% agreed strongly) with no difference by ethnicity or religion.

*'It's really good; it's very accessible for people. You can be put off going to classes because everyone is really fit looking or you think you might not keep up. In the social aspect...you get a chance to meet up and have a coffee and a chat beforehand which is good. If someone arrives on their own they are soon welcomed; it is very friendly.'*

(35 – 44, Child-caring responsibilities, Not deprived– East Durham Belles)



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:

All projects have been doing well at putting women at ease during sessions; 96 per cent of women agreed that they feel comfortable in the place where sessions were held. Think Fit participants mentioned during qualitative interviews the importance of a social, welcoming and non-competitive atmosphere.

Project coaches

6.71 Nearly all participants (96%) agreed that project staff were friendly and welcoming (91% strongly agreed).

6.72 This is supported by the qualitative interviews which emphasised that staff across all projects were highly rated by participants; they were viewed as friendly, encouraging and approachable.

*'They are really supportive and there to give you guidance, especially while working or doing anything – they are always ready to help you.'*

(25 – 34, Child caring responsibilities, Deprivation unknown – Sport4Women)

6.73 A positive and welcoming attitude amongst those running sessions is essential for making women feel at ease; it helps to develop good relations and establish trust, so that women keep returning. Sustained participation enables participants to fully benefit on a physical and social level, a combination that also makes it more likely that they will keep coming back. In essence, a virtuous circle is established. Staff across projects, including project leads and coaches, recognise the importance of this approach.

*'Approachable, people have to feel comfortable with you immediately. You need to be the kind of person where you can have a conversation with someone you've never met before. Also trust - if you say you're going to do something you really need to do it... You have to be consistent in what you say.'*

(Coach – Back to Netball)

6.74 Project staff recognised the importance of having coaches women could relate to, who were self-aware and sensitive to women's needs. This is partly achieved through a light touch approach; coaches across projects have commented about offering subtle hints and tips, as opposed to heavy handed advice or training. This has enabled women to improve, without their confidence or the fun and social atmosphere being undermined. Coaching has to an extent been their secondary role. It is more important that women are relaxed and enjoying themselves.

*'I'd like to be seen as more of a facilitator than a coach, so I'm there for them if they need me. Perhaps they just want to come down and keep fit and not take it to the next level. My personal aim is to have a good number of girls coming back each week, so I know they're enjoying the sessions that I'm putting on and hopefully just getting them feeling good about themselves.'*

(Casual Coach – Think Fit)

6.75 This welcoming and encouraging demeanour was essential to mitigating participant anxieties. Women across projects had concerns about not being fit enough, or good enough. Project staff who actively encouraged participants to work at their own pace and level challenged this assumption. Women were more likely to continue coming if they did not feel pressured to be a certain standard.



*‘They motivate you – just do what you can and don’t look at other people. Take it at your own pace ...  
I was happy with them’*

(45 – 54, No child caring responsibilities, Not deprived – B-inspired)

6.76 In the early stages when coaches were new or inexperienced there were instances of coaches being rated less positively. Retaining coaches, so they become experienced, is a means of mitigating negative feedback. But some turnover in project staff is unavoidable. Regardless some project should be making more effort to ensure consistency and a shared ethos amongst coaching staff. This could be achieved through running ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ skill training sessions, workshops, or holding team meetings to share tips and advice.

*‘The coaches are variable – at least one had never coached before; another was relaxed and didn’t do much; some expected more than we were capable of and some have been great....it is very variable and we rarely get the same person two weeks in a row.’*

(25 – 34, No child caring responsibilities, Deprived)

6.77 Breeze is a good example of a project that has made efforts to equip staff and volunteers with these ‘soft’ skills. Breeze volunteers, known as Breeze Champions, meet regularly to share ideas and offer one another support.

*‘To engage them we have regular meetings with the recreational managers. Local champions meet up for pizza evenings so new volunteers can meet and network other champions and get support from them. Communicating with them little and often is what we’re doing now...We’ve also done some fun videos to provide them with ideas.’*

(Project lead – Breeze)

6.78 But Breeze also recognises that they could be doing more to develop the ‘soft’ skills of coaches and volunteers. They mentioned plans to introduce more formal training for Champions.

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:**

Think Fit has been running induction training for coaches regardless of experience level. Coaches on Think Fit appeared to take a holistic approach to their work. They recognised the importance of having ‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’ skills. Developing both of these skills is important.

An important part of developing these ‘soft’ skills is having regular meetings with all project coaches. It is an opportunity for them to raise issues or concerns, as well as tips and advice. Breeze has been holding regular meetings with volunteers, so women can network and offer one another support.

**Incentivisation**

6.79 Incentives were being used by some projects as a tool for encouraging volunteer and participant engagement on projects. Women into Sport (Leeds) and Women Active 4 Life (Barking & Dagenham), not in the core sample, are two such projects. They have been using loyalty cards from the start.



*'All sessions are pay and play. We've created a loyalty card so if they come to five they get the next one free.'*

(Community Sport and Physical Activity Officer – Leeds)

*'Upon enrolment, each lady receives a subsidised swipe card, which gives access to other activities. This also allows their activities to be tracked.'*

(Sport Development Officer – Barking & Dagenham)

- 6.80 During qualitative interviews with project staff and participants, from the main sample of six projects, incentivisation was rarely mentioned as a tool that has been used to *retain* participants or volunteers. Back to Netball has used incentives (e.g. T shirts) to retain volunteers, but there was limited mention of participant incentives.
- 6.81 Projects are still at a reasonably early stage of delivery and some are considering expanding the use of incentives in future. East Durham Belles, for example, is in the process of considering a loyalty card scheme. Branded sports gear or high street vouchers could also be a useful tool for creating a sense of community and rewarding commitment amongst both participants and volunteers.

GOOD PRACTICE TIPS:

Using incentives, such as high street vouchers or project branded goods, to retain participants and volunteers has been an underused resource across projects. Back to Netball mentioned that they run a volunteer rewards scheme. But there was no mention of using incentives to encourage participant attendance. Participants could be offered some form of incentive once they have attended a certain number sessions; it could make them feel part of a community and valued as a participants.



## Participant story highlighting retention issues: Crystal

**PARTICIPANT STORY: CRYSTAL**

Crystal, aged 25-34, started attending Active Women sessions in February 2012 but left a month later, earlier than she had anticipated.

She had used the gym in the past to go running and after chatting to a friend who had participated in the Active Women session decided she wanted to join her friend's running group. Without this word of mouth promotion she would not have got involved; indeed, she felt the sessions had to be advertised more with special emphasis placed on the fact that they were for women only.

*'Women could be nervous about joining in – you see images of the perfect body and that can be off-putting. They have to advertise it for normal people and stress how the fitness and health levels will improve.'*

Crystal attended four out of the six weekly sessions before stopping due to childcare issues: her husband performed shift work meaning she encountered difficulties with childcare responsibilities and thought she might get left behind the group if she missed too many sessions.

Were the project able to run sessions which suited her availability and provided more

assistance with her childcare responsibilities she would return to the sessions.

*'It would have been better for me if it was spread over a morning or night and on different days.'*

Crystal found the sessions useful but would have found more benefit from them had they been offered more than once a week. The perception of more experienced runners attending sessions was of some concern to her and she would have preferred if the sessions had involved more women of lesser ability.

*'There were some fit looking people there, dressed in all the right gear which can put you off. The more experienced ones tended to keep themselves to themselves – it should have been more mixed.'*

On leaving the sessions, Crystal was not signposted to, or recommended, any other sporting groups or activities. Although she hasn't joined any other groups since leaving East Durham Belles, Crystal has started running on her own due to the motivation the sessions gave her.

*'My get up and go has improved; if I hadn't gone in the first place then I wouldn't be running now.'*



## Participant story highlighting retention issues: Carla

**PARTICIPANT STORY: CARLA**

Carla, aged 25-34, has been attending Active Women sessions since January 2012. Before then she didn't do any exercise at all; she now does three 30 minute sessions a week, mostly fitness and self-defence classes.

Her key worker at the women's refuge where she stayed recommended that she got active and she soon found a gym which had information about the sessions and had a crèche facility. Although she received an initial phone call confirming her booking, she would have also liked more information about the session.

*'The information I got on the phone wasn't that much -I wasn't sure what it was, I just knew they had activities and classes going. A letter would have helped because I could have read about it, seen all the classes and I would have had an idea of what I was going to do.'*

When she turned up to her first session she found it welcoming and thought that people integrated well. She feels that the real strength of the project is its crèche facilities for children. She is also impressed by the

various activities available within the session and the support from staff.

The only barrier to Carla attending sessions, apart from the removal of childcare facilities, would be transport.

*'If anything was going to stop me, it would be the cost of coming down here. It's a bus drive to get here from where I live.'*

The project does well to encourage continued attendance, ensuring constant communication with participants.

*'They ring you every week to find out if you will be coming in which I think is really encouraging, because some people don't do things until they are pushed to do it.'*

She has noted that she has got more active since she joined, and has socialised more, building her confidence. Although she does a lot of activity now, she feels like she would do more if the programmes weren't aimed mostly at basic or entry level.

Carla has also started volunteering at sessions, performing administration and customer services duties.



## 7 Impact of the Active Women Programme: Early Findings

### Summary

- 7.1 Although the second and third years of the Active Women Programme will provide the main tools for assessing impact and sustainability of behaviour change, findings from the Year One quantitative participant survey did produce some early indications of (short term) impacts.
- 7.2 Six in ten (61%) women had done more sport in the previous month than they had done before their involvement with an Active Women project (**short term impact**).
- 26% had done no sport before Active Women but had done so in month prior to interview.
  - 35% had done sport before Active Women and increased the frequency of activity since.
- 7.3 Nearly one in three (28%) women felt that they would not have done any sport without Active Women, while a further half (48%) would have done less sport (**net impact**).
- 7.4 Women from the target groups (deprived and / or with childcare responsibilities) were no more likely to have increased their overall activity levels since their involvement with Active Women (short-term impact) but they were less likely to think that the increase in their levels of sporting activity would have happened anyway (i.e. they were more likely to attribute their participation in sport directly to the Active Women Programme).
- 7.5 Around one in ten (9%) women were already doing some sort of sporting activity at least three times a week prior to joining Active Women and were not in one of the target groups, indicating a relatively low proportion of participants with fewer barriers to sport accessing and benefitting from Active Women (**leakage**).
- 7.6 Over four in five (84%) women had recommended their project or spoken about enjoying the sessions to someone else while nearly three in five (57%) had brought a friend or family member along to a session (**multiplier effects**).
- 7.7 Participants were very positive about the **softer impacts** of their Active Women sessions: nearly all (98%) had fun, while 89% felt fitter and 88% felt better about themselves.

### Introduction

- 7.8 A key objective of the evaluation is to estimate the impact of the Active Women Programme in terms of participant behaviour and experiences. Critically this is in terms of whether it leads to an increase in sporting activity among women but also whether the Programme impacts on women's lives more broadly in terms of their health, confidence and self-esteem. It also looks to explore knock-on effects such as encouraging others to take part in sport.
- 7.9 To establish the *net* impact of the Active Women Programme, it is necessary to establish the counterfactual, i.e. to answer the question:

*What would have happened had the Active Woman programme not been introduced? And therefore what difference did it make?*





7.10 Although tracking the longer-term impacts and evaluating the sustainability of any behaviour change will be best evaluated from longitudinal data collected in Years Two and Three of the evaluation (where we interview some of the same participants to see how their attitudes and behaviour have changed over time), the quantitative survey conducted in Year One included some measures which give first indications of the (short-term) impact of the Active Women Programme on participants.

7.11 This chapter will therefore cover:

- To what extent women have increased how often they take part in sport since attending an Active Women project (and to what extent any increase in sporting participation would have happened without the Active Women Programme)
- To what extent women have felt physical, social or psychological benefits from their participation in sport
- To what extent any positive impact of participation has extended to friends, family or the wider community
- How likely it seems, at this stage, that Active Women projects will lead to sustained behaviour change amongst participants

#### Short term impact

7.12 The 'gross' impact of the Active Women Programme is (the sum of) all reported increases in participation. We refer to short term gross impact as the frequency of activity before participation at an Active Women project compared to activity while on the project or recently after<sup>7</sup>. The figures for activity since involvement with Active Women therefore include all sport, whether or not it is delivered by an Active Women project (on the basis that taking part in Active Women may have encouraged women to take part in more sport in general).

7.13 **Before their involvement with Active Women, 28% of women were doing sporting activity three or more times a week, 13% twice a week, 15% once a week, 9% less often and 34% not at all.**

7.14 These frequency levels – particularly that nearly three in ten women were already doing three or more weekly activity sessions – suggest that a relatively high proportion of participants had fewer barriers to participation in sport than may have been anticipated at the time that funding was awarded. However, where women were in one of the target groups (deprived / with childcare responsibilities), getting them involved in sport through Active Women can have significant value even if they were already doing some sport as this may lead to them becoming champions of the project and encouraging less active friends and family to take part too.

7.15 Where women were not part of the target groups but did little activity before getting involved with Active Women, there is also still significant value in getting these women to increase their levels of

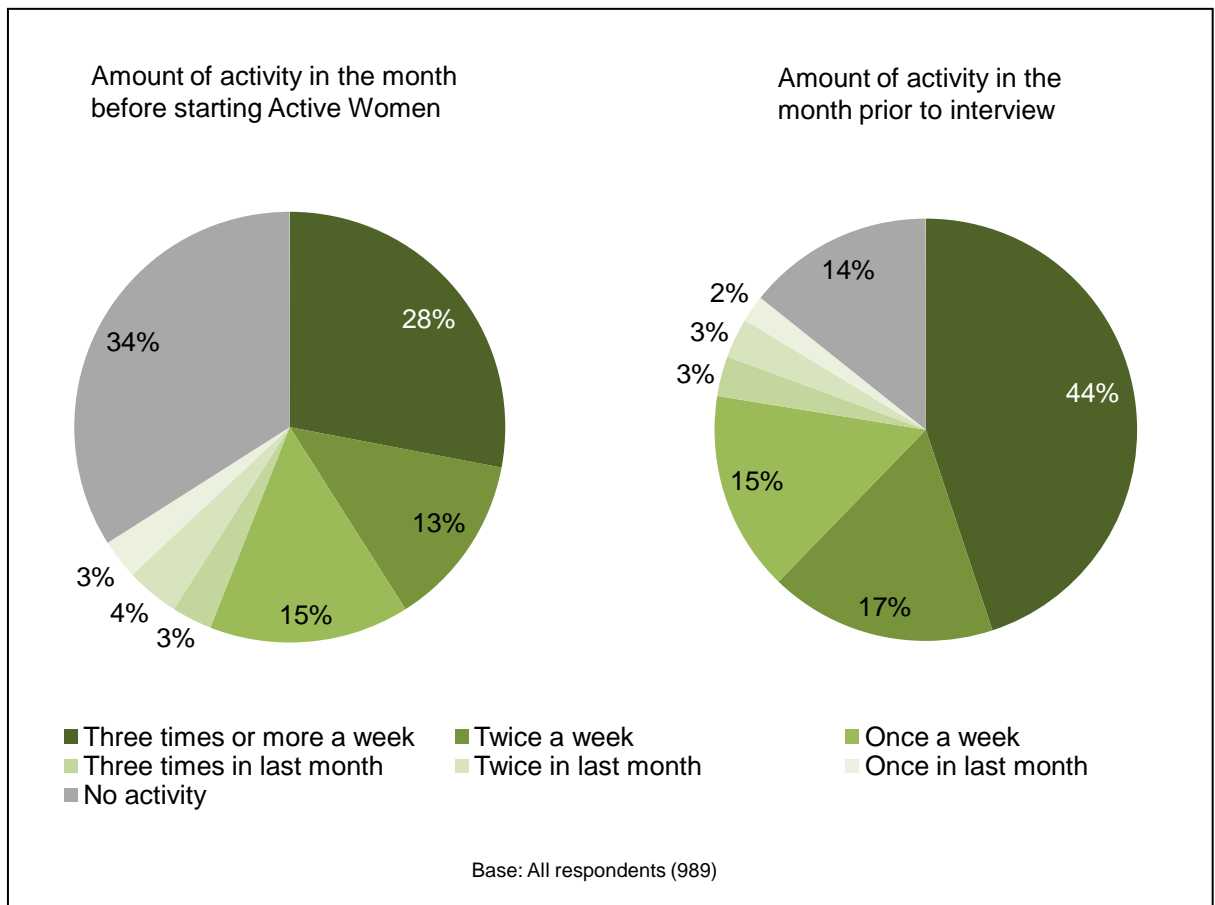
<sup>7</sup> Participants were asked which sport or activities they had done in the month prior to the interview and which they had done in the month before they got involved with the Active Women project they had attended. For each sport mentioned at each stage, participants were then asked how often they had taken part in it during the timeframe in question. Comparing the information given at the two stages shows how participants' overall sporting activity had changed since their involvement with the Active Women Programme and gives us an estimate for the short term gross impact of the Programme. The activity of walking was excluded from this part of the analysis, in line with Sport England's sport indicators.



activity, particularly as the in-depth interviews suggest that such women also have barriers to taking part in sport which the projects have addressed.

- 7.16 Around one in ten (9%) women surveyed were not in the target groups and were already doing at least three sessions of sport per week. Although the Active Women Programme was not set up to target such women, the projects have a policy of not turning anyone away which is key to their inclusive nature and friendly / welcoming approach. In this context, it may well be felt that some ‘leakage’, where the project is used by women outside the target groups who were doing sport anyway, is acceptable.
- 7.17 It is also important to clarify that for a number of women the activity they report doing before involvement with the Programme (and since) could consist of activity sessions lasting less than 30 minutes and / or relatively low intensity activities such cycling short distances to work, rather than the sorts of sports that Active Women projects focus on<sup>8</sup>.
- 7.18 **In the month before taking part in the survey, 44% of women had done sporting activity three or more times a week, 17% twice a week, 15% once a week, 8% less often and 14% not at all.** Figure 7.1 shows the extent to which these proportions had changed from women’s activity levels before their involvement with Active Women.

**Figure 7.1: Comparison of amount of activity before starting Active Women and in month before interview**



<sup>8</sup> As previously mentioned however, the activity of walking was excluded from the analysis.



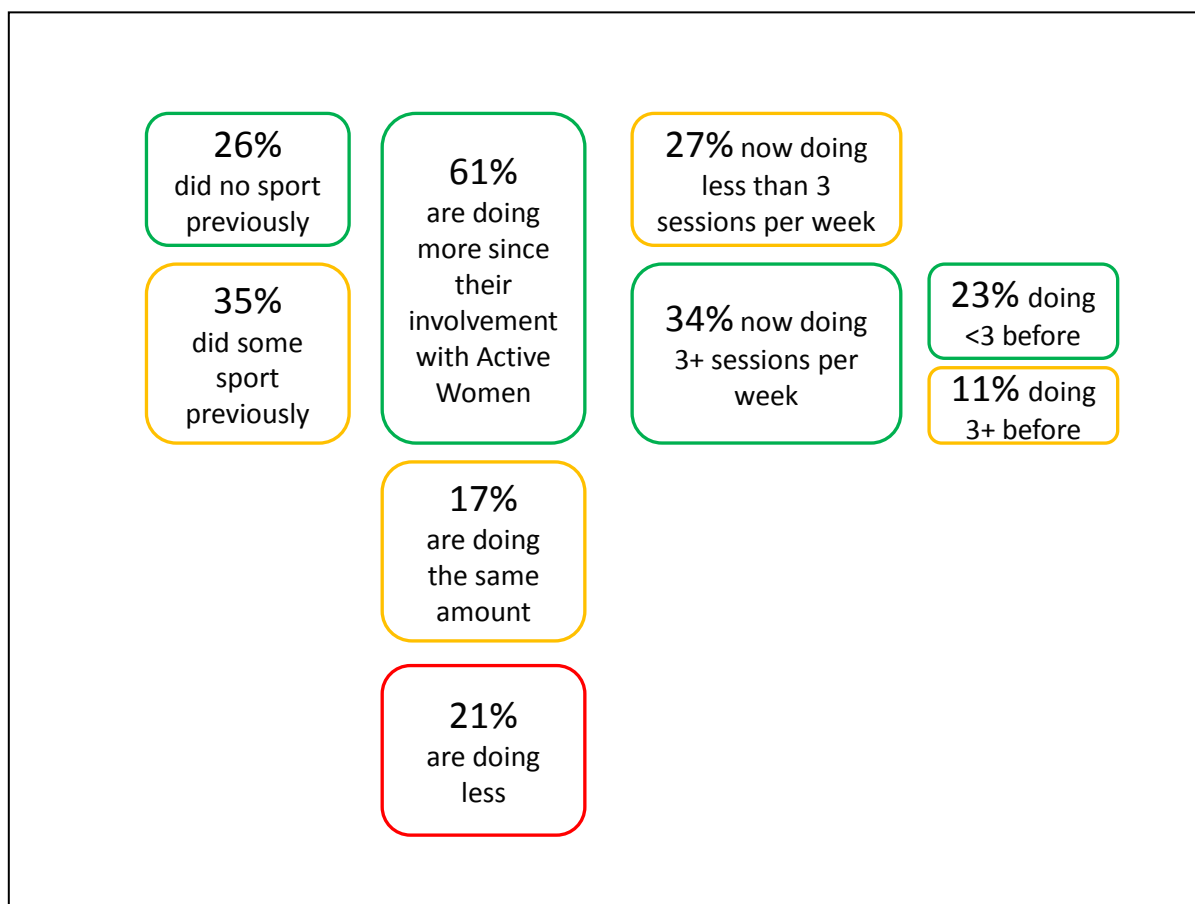
- 7.19 As would be anticipated, the target groups of women living in deprived areas and women with childcare responsibilities were more likely to have been doing no sport at all before their involvement with Active Women (38% each). Women with childcare responsibilities were also less likely to have been doing three or more sessions of sport per week (24%), although there was no difference by deprivation status.
- 7.20 In the more recent month, women living in deprived areas and those with childcare responsibilities were still more likely to be doing no sport at all (18% and 17% respectively). Women with childcare responsibilities were still less likely to be doing three or more sessions of sport per week (38%), but there was no difference by level of deprivation.
- 7.21 In summary, **three in five (61%) women had done more sport in the previous month than they had done before their involvement with an Active Women project.** This compares to 17% who had done about the same amount of activity and 21% who had done less in the more recent period.
- 7.22 There was some variation by project. On one project the proportion of women who had increased their overall levels of sporting activity since their involvement with Active Women was as high as 77%, whilst on another it was as low as 52%.
- 7.23 There were no significant differences between women across the Active Women target groups of deprivation and childcare responsibilities.
- 7.24 **Looking more into the 61% of all women who had increased their level of sport or activity, this splits into 26% who were not doing any sport before their involvement with Active Women and 35% who were doing some sport previously.**
- 7.25 The fact that one in four women (26%) did no sport in the month before taking part in Active Women but had done so recently (in the month before the survey) indicates that projects are having some success at reaching women with low levels of engagement with sport. More disappointingly, women in the target groups (deprived and / or with childcare responsibilities) were not significantly more likely to have been encouraged to take up sport for the first time.
- 7.26 Women with childcare responsibilities were also not significantly more likely to be in the group of women who had done sport before their involvement with Active Women and to have increased their activity levels further (34% vs. 35% average) and women from deprived areas were less likely to have been positively affected by the Active Programme in this way (31% vs. 39% of those from non-deprived areas).
- 7.27 As Sport England would like women to take part in at least three sessions of sport per week, it is also of interest whether women who had increased their levels of sporting activity since being involved with Active Women had reached this threshold. As has been shown, around three in five (61%) women were doing more activity since becoming involved with their Active Women project. Splitting this group further shows that:
- Over one in four (27%) were doing more activity than they had been previously but still less than three sessions per week
  - One in three women (34%) were doing at least three activity sessions per week
    - One in four (23%) women were previously doing less than three sessions per week but reached this level of frequency following their involvement with Active Women;



- o A further 11% of women had already been doing at least three sessions per week but further increased this frequency.

7.28 Figure 7.2 shows a summary of the short-term impact which the Active Women Programme has had on participants.

**Figure 7.2: Summary of the short-term impact of the Active Women Programme**



7.29 Women with childcare responsibilities were less likely to have increased their level of activity and to be doing at least three sessions of sport per week following their involvement with Active Women (31% vs. 37% of women without childcare responsibilities). There was no difference by whether women lived in deprived areas.

**Net impact**

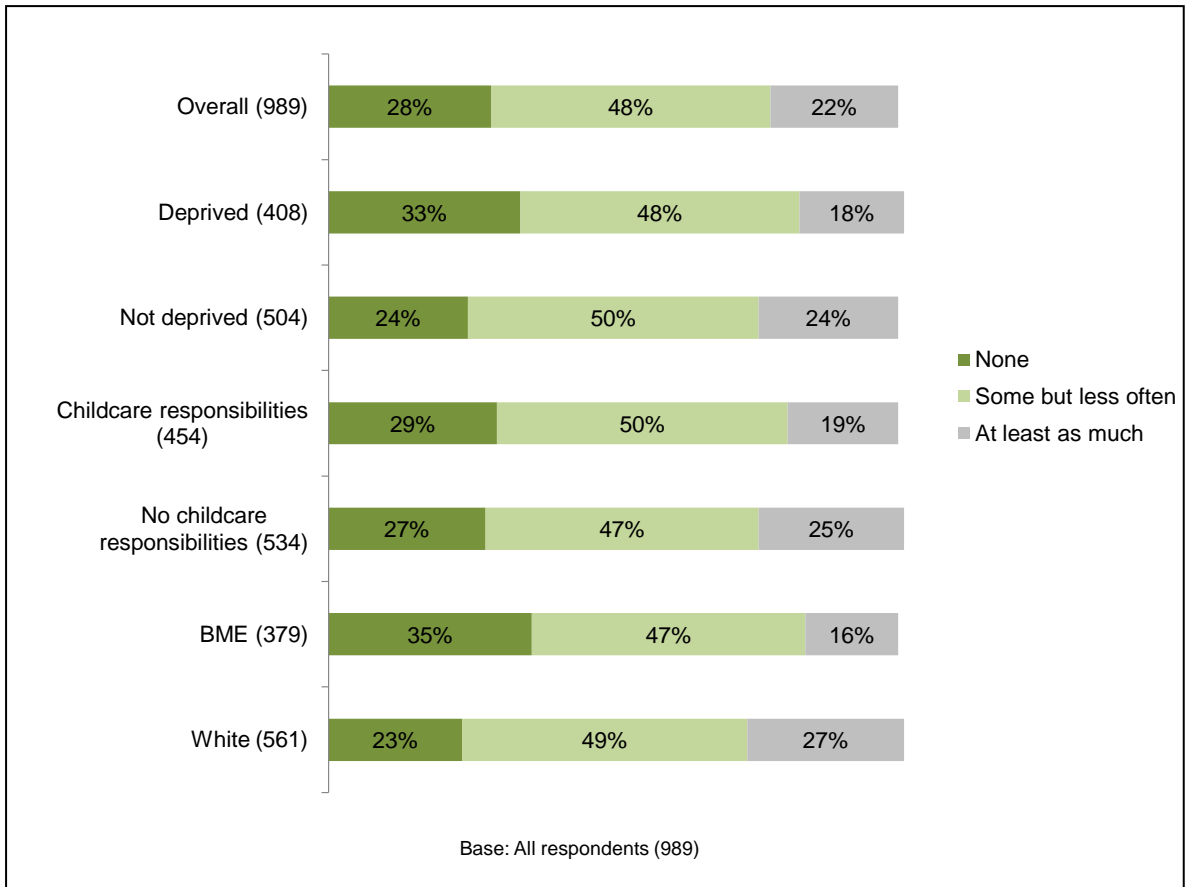
7.30 The net impact of the Programme can be assessed by considering how much sport women feel they would have taken part in if it did not exist. This differs from the gross impact as it asks women to consider to what extent the Active Women project they attended was directly responsible for their participation levels and excludes increases in activity which may have happened anyway (i.e. deadweight). **Three quarters of women (76%) felt that they would have done less (48%) or no (28%) sport if the Active Women Programme did not exist, indicating that the majority of women feel that the project they attend has been critical in raising their activity levels. Only one in five (22%) women felt they would have done at least as much sport or activity if the project did not exist.**



- 7.31 On first sight, it is perhaps a little surprising that the proportion of women feeling a positive impact of the Active Women Programme when considering what sport they would have done if it didn't exist (76%) is higher than the number of women who increased their levels of sporting activity since their involvement with the Programme (61%). To some extent, this is the case of small discrepancies due to women considering the question of net impact at an overall level, whilst the questions on activity pre and post Active Women involvement were more detailed (the former is attitudinal, the latter behavioural, so the two measures don't equate exactly). There are also cases where women's activity levels stayed the same or even slightly decreased following their involvement with Active Women but not as much as they would have done if the projects did not exist, for example some women will have had to stop attending sports sessions due to other commitments but have been (sometimes) able to go to a (more convenient) Active Women session instead.
- 7.32 Participants on one project were particularly likely to feel that Active Women had played an especially important role in helping them get active, with two in five (40%) participants feeling that they would have done no sport if it didn't exist. At the other end of the spectrum, over two in five (43%) participants on another project felt that they would have done at least as much sport anyway (i.e. relatively high levels of deadweight).
- 7.33 Women living in deprived areas and women from BME communities were more likely to feel that they would have done no sport if Active Women didn't exist (35% BME vs. 23% White and 33% deprived vs. 24% not deprived), indicating a particularly positive impact of the Active Women Programme on these groups. Similarly positively, women who care for children under the age of 16 were less likely to feel they would have done at least as much sport or activity if the Active Women Programme did not exist (19% with children vs. 25% without). Figure 7.3 shows this split by ethnicity, deprivation and childcare responsibilities.



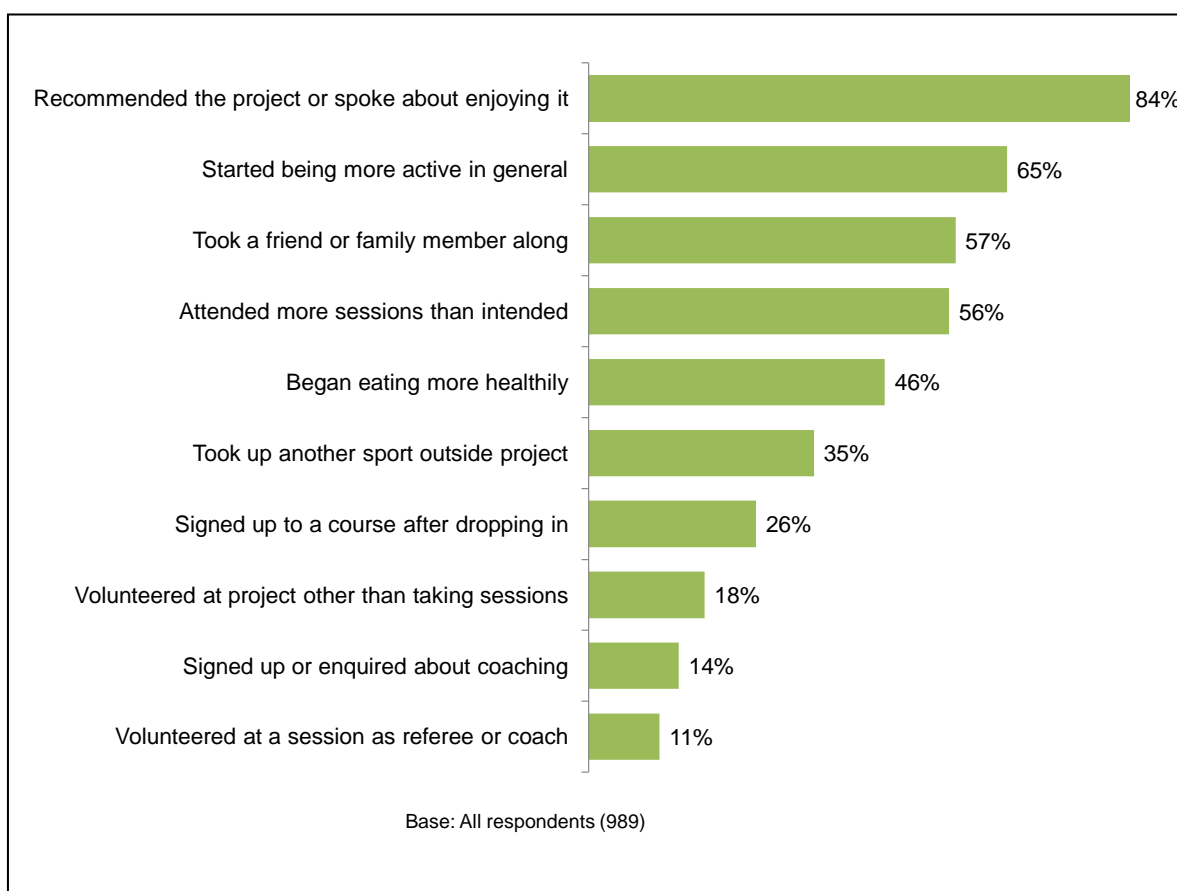
**Figure 7.3: Comparative amount of sport participants would do if they had not got involved in Active Women by project**



Wider benefits of participation

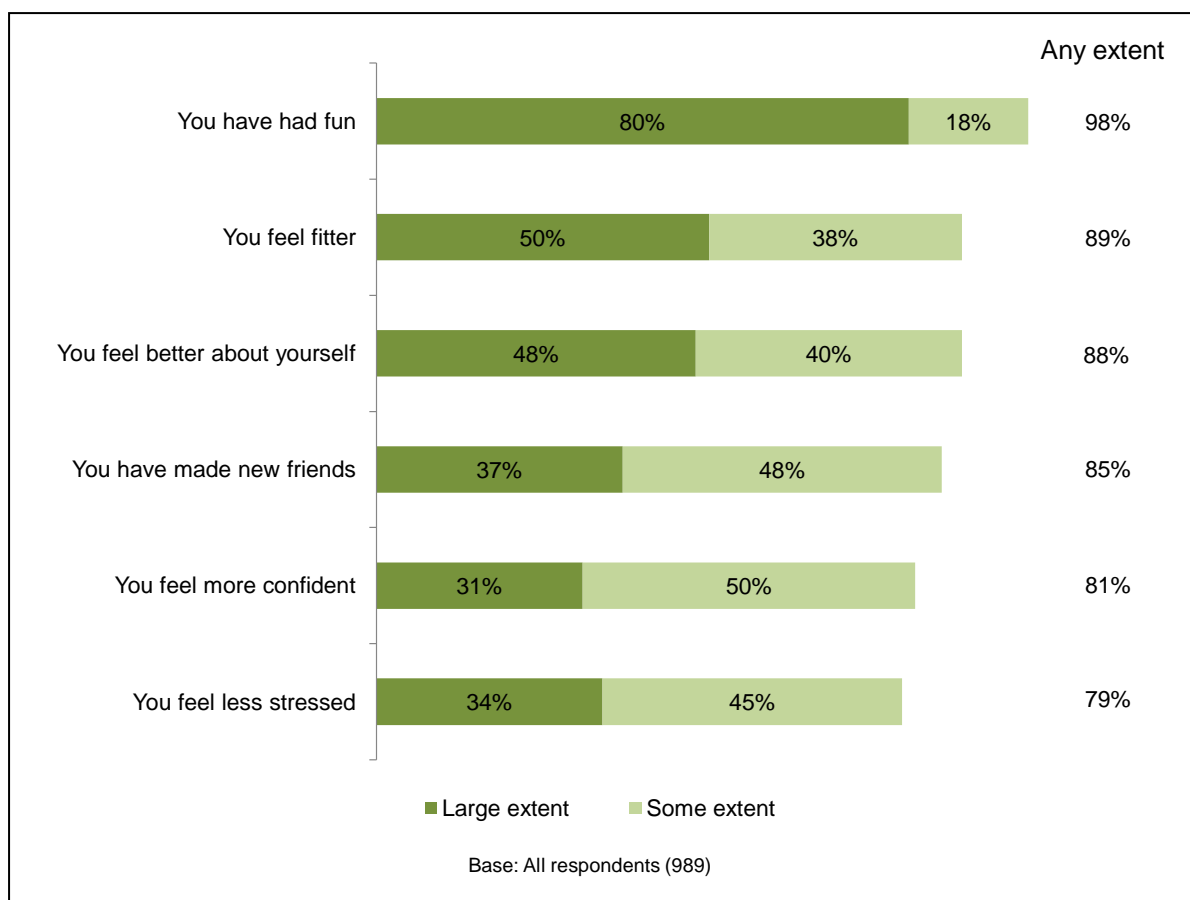
7.34 Beyond an increase in the number of women participating in regular sporting activity, the evaluation also explored the impact of the Active Women Programme on wider well-being and community participation. Figure 7.4 presents these wider benefits.



**Figure 7.4: Wider benefits of participation**

- 7.35 The Active Women Programme has (as previously mentioned) had a positive impact on women's overall activity levels. Almost two in three (65%) women felt that they had started being more active in general as a result of participating in an Active Women project and over half (56%) had started going to the sessions more than they thought they would. Over one in three (35%) women had taken up another sport or activity OUTSIDE the project (35%), indicating an increased appetite for taking part in sport more broadly and one in four (26%) women had signed up to a course after starting on a drop-in basis, indicating that their commitment to the project had increased over time.
- 7.36 In terms of wider health outcomes (not exercise-related), almost half of women (46%) reported having changed their habits to eat more healthily.
- 7.37 Commitment to the project (and therefore to participation in sport) can further be examined by levels of interest in volunteering and coaching. One in ten women (11%) had volunteered at an Active Women session, for example as a referee or coach, whilst one in five (18%) had volunteered in some other way, for example helping out with publicity or at an event (27% on one project). In terms of coaching, one in seven women (14%) had either signed up or enquired about coaching.
- 7.38 In terms of 'softer' measures which assess how participants felt about their participation in the Active Women Programme, it is also clear that the projects have been making a big difference to the women taking part (as shown in Figure 7.5).

**Figure 7.5: ‘Softer’ benefits of participation**



7.39 Nine in ten women felt fitter as a result (89%, including 50% to a large extent). Almost all participants felt that they had fun (98%, including 80% to a large extent) which is a positive sign for retention. Four in five women or more also felt better about themselves (88%), made new friends (85%), felt more confident (81%) or felt less stressed (79%) as a result of their participation.

7.40 On one project participants were less likely than average to have felt fitter as a result of their participation in the project (75% vs. 89% average), which may reflect that the project has been recruiting a higher proportion of women who were already taking part in sport.

7.41 Another project seems to have had a particularly positive impact on the feelings of its participants, with higher proportions of these feeling better about themselves (94%), more confident (89%) and less stressed (88%) than average. This may be because of the project’s holistic approach, including workshops on issues such as self-esteem and confidence-building as well as sporting sessions.

7.42 Women from deprived areas were particularly likely to have gained from the programme in terms of ‘to a large extent’ feeling better about themselves (55% deprived vs. 44% non-deprived), feeling less stressed (41% vs. 30%), making new friends (41% vs. 36%) and gaining confidence (36% vs. 28%).

**Multiplier effects**

7.43 As discussed in the recruitment section, **word of mouth has played a key role in attracting women to Active Women projects, with over four in five (84%) women having recommended the project**





**to someone else or talked to someone about having enjoyed the sessions and almost three in five (57%) women having taken a friend or family member along with them to a session.** In this way, the Active Women projects have extended their reach beyond just those directly recruited by project staff or volunteers and penetrated further into communities.

- 7.44 Bringing a friend or family member along to sessions appears to be integral to attracting greater numbers of Active Women target group participants. Women living in deprived areas, (63% vs. 54% non-deprived), women from BME communities (62% vs. 53% White) and Muslim women (64% vs. 55%) were all more likely to have brought a friend or family member along with them.

#### Sustainability of behaviour change

- 7.45 While the second and third years of the evaluation will provide us with a more detailed understanding of longer term sustainability of behaviour change, these early findings do provide us with an idea of intentions for the forthcoming year in terms of activity levels and participation.
- 7.46 Women's motivation to continue exercising / taking part in sport in the next 12 months was high, with almost three in five (58%) intending to do a bit more over this time period than they did at the time of the survey, one in three (35%) intending to maintain their current exercise levels and only 5% of women thinking it likely that they would do less exercise over the next 12 months.
- 7.47 Those with childcare responsibilities were also more likely to intend increasing their activity levels (63% vs. 54% of those without), whilst those without were more likely to anticipate maintaining their current levels (40% vs. those with).
- 7.48 Those who still take part in sessions were also asked how likely they would be to continue with the same level of sporting activity if the Active Women project ceased to exist. Three in five women (62%) felt they would be either very (28%) or fairly (34%) likely to do this, whilst 36% felt they would be unlikely to do so. Participants from one project were particularly likely to feel they would continue to do the same level of sport, even without the project's involvement (71% likely vs. 62% average) and participants at another were particularly likely to say they would be very likely to do so (42% vs. 28% average).



## Participant story highlighting impact issues: Cheryl

**PARTICIPANT STORY: CHERYL**

Cheryl, aged 35-44, started attending Active Women sessions in October 2011. She now attends the session twice a week. She was on maternity leave when a friend who attended the sessions recommended she participated as well.

The project did not provide a crèche, as they did not have the funding for this, but did allow participants to bring their children along. However she doesn't understand why, if the project is designed to target women with childcare responsibilities, it doesn't do more to remove these barriers to participation. A crèche facility would be of great benefit to her. The Active Women sessions were crucial to re-engage her with sport after pregnancy.

*'I don't think I would have done any sport until I went back to work and even then I would have struggled; possibly not for another year. It would have been hard with a little baby.'*

The social side of the sessions as well as the women-only aspect allows for a non-

threatening environment in which she feels comfortable. She also finds the health talk at the end of sessions very helpful.

*'The best thing about women only sessions is that they don't have that pressure on you that you should be good at sport which I remember from school was horrible. Expectation is zero but not patronizing; therefore you feel comfortable.'*

Cheryl feels a lot better mentally as a result of the sessions and is shocked by how much she enjoyed them. Her husband is also happy that she's participating in sport while she's also managed to get two friends to come along to sessions.

In terms of alternatives to Active Women sessions she is aware she could pay for a gym or run in the park but the project has not directed her to any and she doesn't want to do anything too competitive for fear that it would remove the fun from the activity.



## Participant story highlighting impact issues: Melanie

**PARTICIPANT STORY: MELANIE**

Melanie had been going on bike rides with her husband for around a year before attending her first Active Women session in June 2011 as she wanted to improve.

She only came across the project by chance, when her husband found it mentioned on an online messaging board. She feels the session would have benefitted from more advertising.

The session appealed to Melanie because it was described as 'beginners' level so she thought it would be less threatening with other people who, like her, were not so experienced. Still, she still had reservations about the level of difficulty of the sessions and would have appreciated a chat with a coach prior to the first session to allay her fears.

She thinks if Active Women hadn't existed she would have given up on cycling and perhaps gone swimming instead; certainly she would have done less sporting activity overall.

Melanie values the group aspect of the sessions and the fact they are for women, and it is these elements which motivate her to keep attending. However, now she has been attending for a while she finds the

beginner sessions too easy and there aren't enough sessions catering towards those with a bit more experience.

Aside from the level of difficulty, she is very positive over other aspects of the sessions, such as the professionalism and knowledge of staff and the friendly and non-competitive atmosphere. More contact from staff might encourage her to attend more often. More motivation between sessions would also encourage her to keep active.

*'They could tell you what you could be doing in the week and this is what you should be aiming for when you are not coming out with us. Maybe that is laziness on my part that I can't do that myself.'*

However, Melanie does now feel more confident and encouraged to do more sporting activities. She has started doing sport outside the project and can see that her fitness has improved. It has also allowed her to set a good example to her children and has made her improve her eating habits.

Although Melanie has not been directed to any other sporting activities or groups, she is aware of other events which she is considering joining. She hopes to be able to volunteer for the project once she has reached an appropriate level of fitness.



## 8 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1 Overall, the conclusions are positive. There is evidence of a great deal of effort and dedication on the part of project staff and volunteers, and a culture of creativity on a generally tight budget.
- 8.2 Where projects do reach women in the target groups (those living in deprived areas and / or those caring for children under 16), the positive impact of the Programme can be enormous – not only do almost all participants rate the projects positively, but they cite wider ranging benefits as a result of taking part, such as changing their eating habits or gaining the confidence to become more active in general. Some of the women interviewed said it had genuinely changed their lives.
- 8.3 That said, reaching women in the target groups has not necessarily been easy for projects. The management information chapter in this report shows that while, overall, the numbers of participants recruited meets the Year One target, the numbers of participants living in deprived areas, or caring for children, are considerably lower. Feedback suggests that projects have been particularly focussing their energies on getting sufficient numbers overall, rather than specifically aiming to get those in the target groups.
- 8.4 It is worth noting that non-target women, i.e. those not living in deprived areas and not (or no longer) caring for children under 16, do vary in terms of their attitude towards exercise and the extent to which they are helped by the projects. Some had very little previous experience of exercise and were facing similar confidence-barriers to getting involved as women in the target groups. These non-target women were particularly encouraged by the friendliness of the coaches and the sociable nature of the sessions, and would have been very unlikely to seek out other kinds of ‘regular’ exercise or sporting classes. This suggests the Active Women programme can be an essential boost for some non-target as well as target women.
- 8.5 However, some non-target women were more regular exercisers, comfortable in leisure centres and happy taking part in general sporting sessions, and were attracted to the Active Women programme due to the convenient times, locations and cost of sessions. While these women will still benefit from sessions (any extra activity being better than none), the impact will be considerably lower than for women with little or no history of exercise.
- 8.6 As an additional note on the numbers, while participant figures overall are meeting targets, throughput figures are considerably lower. This suggests that projects are managing to recruit in sufficient numbers, for instance with one-off publicity events and initial incentives, but that keeping women attending the sessions longer term is harder. Some projects showed some good ideas for retaining participants, but across the board this was not systematic and increasing participant retention should be a focus of the next 12 months.
- 8.7 On a related note, while participant numbers are indeed meeting Year One targets, these initial targets were designed to be relatively low in comparison to targets for Years Two and Three, to allow time to establish partnership links and marketing ideas, and to allow for overcoming teething problems. Projects appear to have met these targets by utilising the maximum funding and resource currently available to them, therefore increasing these targets further in Year Two and Three with a similar level of funding and therefore a finite project team, as well as (for local projects) a finite community of participants, could be a challenge. **Guidance from Sport England on how to scale up project working using a similar level of resource could be useful.**
- 8.8 One potential source of confusion for projects, looking forward, was the kinds of sports and activities that ‘count’ towards Active Women targets. Some leads are under the impression that they are allowed to include activities like dance classes and Zumba, for example, while others believe they are



not. This means some projects are offering activities like dance and Zumba in order to get new recruits 'in the door', but are under the impression that the women taking part cannot be counted as true participants until they have taken part in another kind of sporting activity within the project.

**Consensus and clarification from Sport England on whether these exercise classes are acceptable activities in terms of targets would be beneficial.**

- 8.9 Related to this is the idea of flexibility in general; there is evidence of creative ideas from projects in terms of making changes 'as they go along' (sometimes to the activities offered, for example the addition of a fashionable new sport or activity like Zumba, but also to the budgetary structure of projects, or ways of recruiting or retaining participants) in order to accommodate the needs and wants of participants as the project becomes aware of them. Ultimately these are 'learning organisations' and as such should be expected (and encouraged) to change and adapt to circumstances, with this potentially key to hitting participant targets over the next two years. However, many are not sure how much scope there is for diverting from their original offering. **Clarification from Sport England on the extent to which projects can be flexible in the activities they offer would be helpful for projects.**
- 8.10 The issue of childcare is worth some consideration. In the main, projects planned to offer this but the cost for most became prohibitive when the numbers of children using it could not be guaranteed. To try and get around this, projects are mindful of scheduling sessions for when children were at school, often timed so that mothers could attend classes as soon as they dropped their children off in the morning. Some projects also introduced sessions that mums and their children could take part in together, though this was generally more suitable for slightly older children (for instance those over eight). Other projects mentioned that they had organised an informal 'nanny' rota whereby each week one participant at the session minds the others' children, or had teamed up with children's centres and charities that had been able to provide care at a reduced price, though some projects found these organisations difficult to engage. **Going forward, some guidance from Sport England on whether provision of childcare should be considered a central offering, would be beneficial**, and if so, some tips on related partnership working, or the provision of extra funding.
- 8.11 Another central issue is that personal, proactive, face to face marketing of the projects out in the community is by far the most effective way of recruiting participants, particularly those target women in deprived areas who are less likely to be reached by posters, leaflets or online publicity. Similarly, personal contact from the coaches between sessions such as texts and phone calls is a particularly effective way of keeping women engaged and returning to sessions, with projects reporting that women who miss sessions are far more likely to return if they are contacted by a member of the project team. However, as effective as this contact is, most projects acknowledge that it is resource intensive, and that as the projects expand over the next two years, maintaining this personal touch for new recruits (more of which are needed to meet targets) and existing members (the pool of which will get steadily bigger) will become more difficult as time goes on. **Given that this kind of contact is essential for recruiting and retaining participants from (particularly) the target group, some tips from Sport England on how to do this most effectively could be very helpful.** One suggestion would be to utilise enthusiastic volunteer 'ambassador' participants as much as possible, whose sole role would be to head into the community to increase awareness and interest of the programme as far as possible, and still provide a familiar face when new recruits turn up at sessions.
- 8.12 Also relating to project staffing, the administrative burden (or simply the general burden in terms of time spent on the project) on staff and volunteers was in several cases higher than expected. Some coaches mentioned that the amount of coaching required left little time for the required marketing-related tasks, or general administration. Other projects cited that funding for an administrative assistant would be very helpful, or that while administrative help by volunteers is now helpful, in the



early days of the project this kind of regular assistance was not available. Many project staff members and volunteers felt that some guidance in terms of time management would be helpful going forward.

- 8.13 Another main theme that came out of the research was the importance of high quality coaching, with the soft skills and personality of coaches being one of the keys to retaining participants. Projects differed considerably in their recruitment and training of coaches, with some initially having access to coaches from sister or partnership organisations, while others had to source and train all coaches from scratch. Likewise, some projects required that their coaches reach a specific qualification level (generally level 1, sometimes level 2, in their chosen sport), whereas others simply needed coaches to know the rules of the relevant sport and have a particularly bubbly and welcoming personality. While this difference in approach is not a problem in itself given the different reaches of the various projects, **some 'best practice' guidance from Sport England on recruiting, training, assessing and then engaging, incentivising and retaining the best possible coaches would be helpful.** Some projects also mentioned that funding the training of coaches (particularly funding the journey from participant to coach) was expensive, which put a cap on the number of coaches it was possible to train at one time, and sometimes held women back who were ready to take on the challenge of training.
- 8.14 Partnership working is another main theme running through the findings. There is evidence of projects being innovative when it comes to forming links with other organisations, and substantial groundwork being laid for the future (since one of the main advantages of partnership working is making contact with 'hard to reach' women in the target group, these links will help projects to increase recruitment as necessary over the coming years). That said, partnership working can also allow for a greater number and range of sessions that are in effect 'subcontracted' out by the project. While this is positive in terms of target numbers and a more varied experience for participants, it is possible that increased partnership working could mean some dilution of the Active Women brand, and some loss of control compared to when a smaller, core project team was involved in delivery.
- 8.15 Overall, and not unsurprisingly for the Programme's initial year, projects have experienced some teething problems, particularly in terms of recruiting within the target group, and retaining participants in general. However, within projects there is also evidence of a culture of creativity and innovation, as well as a genuine passion for the cause, and where the target women are being reached, the projects are delivering a really good programme, with wide-ranging positive impacts, on a limited budget. Guidance from Sport England on the points raised above will aid projects further as they enter their second and third years.
- 8.16 As well as the recommendations highlighted above in terms of guidance from Sport England, the research has identified emerging good practice for individual projects to act on as well. To some extent this is difficult to summarise as recommendations will vary based on each project's individual context and target groups. However, broad recommendations for projects to consider over the next year of the project include:
- Wherever possible, engage face-to-face with potential participants in the community as far as possible, as this is the most effective way of raising awareness and enthusiasm among women in deprived areas. Therefore be inventive and particularly consider all the places where women in these areas may spend time, rather than just mainstream locations. This should result in recruiting greater numbers of women from the target groups.
  - Utilising volunteers to make this personal contact in order to reduce the workload of the project lead and coaches, with the added bonus that they may already have links within / knowledge of the community and know how best (and where) to increase awareness and interest.



- Maintaining regular personal contact with participants between sessions via email, text or telephone – whatever is considered most suitable. This could be information on upcoming events or sessions, or simply friendly encouragement. This contact is particularly important for participants who stop attending sessions, in a bid to help them return.
- Speak personally to current participants and ask what could be changed to make the sessions easier or more enjoyable to attend for them. While it will not be possible to accommodate everyone, this contact could provide some important nuggets of information about the barriers that women face and how the project could adapt going forward.
- In particular, assess the appetite among participants for family-friendly sessions and events, i.e. sessions that children can join (and gather ideas from women on how this could be provided).
- Be innovative when looking into partnership working in order to utilise as much extra resource as possible, particularly with regards to marketing and practical help such as (for example) providing childcare, or advice sessions that fall outside the scope of the project that may nevertheless be of interest to women.



## 9 Appendices

A full list of all Active Women projects

- 9.1 Table 9.1 presents a full list of Active Women projects involved in the Programme, and how they have been referred to throughout the report

**Table 9.1 List of Active Women projects**

Project Name	Organisation	Report reference
<i>Focussed evaluation</i>		
Back to Netball	England Netball	Back to Netball
B-inspired	Braunstone Foundation Charity	B-inspired
Breeze	British Cycling	Breeze
East Durham Belles	Wingate & Station Town Family Centre	East Durham Belles
Sport4Women	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Sport4Women
Think Fit	Tottenham Hotspur Foundation	Think Fit
<i>Basic evaluation</i>		
Active Women Catch 22	Catch 22	Catch 22
Active Women Luton	Active Luton	Luton
Active Women in Hull	Kingston upon Hull City Council	Hull
Active Women: Hastings and Rother	Hastings Borough Council	Hastings
Fit, Free and Fabulous	HARV domestic violence team	HARV
GO Sport	Oxford City Council	Oxford
L.A.D.I.E.S Get Active Community Project	Hyndburn Borough Council	Hyndburn
Nottingham City Active Women Wellbeing Project	Nottingham City Council	Nottingham
Sandwell Active Women	Sandwell Leisure Trust	Sandwell
Women Active 4 Life	London Borough of Barking & Dagenham	Barking & Dagenham
Women Get Active	Liverpool City Council	Liverpool
Women into Sport	Leeds City Council	Leeds
Women's Sporting Champions	Essex County Council	Essex
UsGirls	StreetGames	StreetGames





Profile of surveyed respondents

- 9.2 To understand how different groups of women have been affected by the Active Women Programme it is necessary to further understand the profile of each of the projects covered by the survey<sup>9</sup>.
- 9.3 Two thirds of participants (66%) who completed the quantitative survey fell into one of the two target groups for Active Women projects (women with childcare responsibilities or from a deprived area). Sport4Women and B-inspired participants were particularly likely belong to these groups (86% and 77% respectively) while fewer than half of Breeze and StreetGames participants were in the target groups (50% and 42% respectively).
- 9.4 B-inspired participants responding to the quantitative survey were more likely than average to have childcare responsibilities (62% vs. 46% average) and come from a deprived area (49% vs. 41% average). Sport4Women and East Durham Belles participants were also more likely to come from deprived areas (73% and 52% respectively). Table 9.2 profiles the differences across projects by the proportion of participants living in deprived areas and the proportion of those with child caring responsibilities.

**Table 9.2 Profile of respondents by childcare responsibilities, deprivation and target group**

Project	Target	Deprived area	Child caring responsibilities
	%	%	%
Sport4Women ( <i>Base: 64</i> )	86	73	55
B-inspired ( <i>247</i> )	77	49	62
East Durham Belles ( <i>191</i> )	71	52	44
Think Fit ( <i>97</i> )	62	32	44
Back to Netball ( <i>202</i> )	60	34	42
Street Games ( <i>86</i> )	50	30	28
Breeze ( <i>102</i> )	42	15	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>

- 9.5 Participants represented a good spread of ages as shown in Table 9.3. StreetGames is aimed particularly at 16 – 25 year olds, and this is reflected in the younger profile of their participants (38% aged 16 – 24 vs. 15% average). Sport4Women and Back to Netball had more participants responding to the survey than average in the 25 – 34 category (39% and 38% respectively vs. 27% average) and Breeze in the 45 – 54 category (33% vs. 19% average).
- 9.6 In terms of ethnicity, BME women represent a much greater proportion of Active Women participants responding to the quantitative survey than they do of the population as a whole (38% vs. 11% of women aged 16+ in England)<sup>10</sup>, reflecting the target localities of the projects being deprived areas. The ethnicity profile of projects also varies a great deal, with higher than average proportions of BME women at B-inspired, Sport4Women and Think Fit (73%, 58% and 48% respectively) and lower proportions at Back to Netball (31%) and, particularly, Breeze (7%) and East Durham Belles (4%).

<sup>9</sup> This is the profile of those participants who took part in the quantitative survey, whilst Chapter 4 discusses the profile of all women who have taken part in the Active Women projects.

<sup>10</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2011). *PEEG, Current Estimates, Population Estimates by Ethnic Group Mid-2009 (experimental)*.



**Table 9.3 Profile of respondents by age and ethnicity**

Project	Age					Ethnicity	
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	White	BME
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Back to Netball (202)	21	38	26	15	*	66	31
B-inspired (247)	11	23	29	20	17	27	73
Breeze (102)	4	9	27	33	26	91	7
East Durham Belles (191)	13	29	23	19	17	96	4
Sport4Women (Base: 64)	17	39	30	13	2	17	58
Street Games (86)	38	29	17	13	2	53	45
Think Fit (97)	11	21	30	22	16	30	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>38</b>

### Logic models

- 9.7 Analytical logic models were created for each Active Women project in the focussed evaluation to assist evaluation of their schemes. These were used as tools for understanding whether the outputs, outcomes and impacts of each project represented success against the objectives set for it.
- 9.8 Using the analytic logic model approach helped show the *causal assumptions* behind each project's activities, outputs and outcomes and indicate whether these were achieved. They were also used as the basis for deciding which indicators to capture and explore in the research.
- 9.9 The following six pages showcase the logic models designed by examining the original bids, and incorporating information from follow up interviews with the project leads and other members of staff involved with the projects.



Figure 9.1 Logic Model: Back to Netball

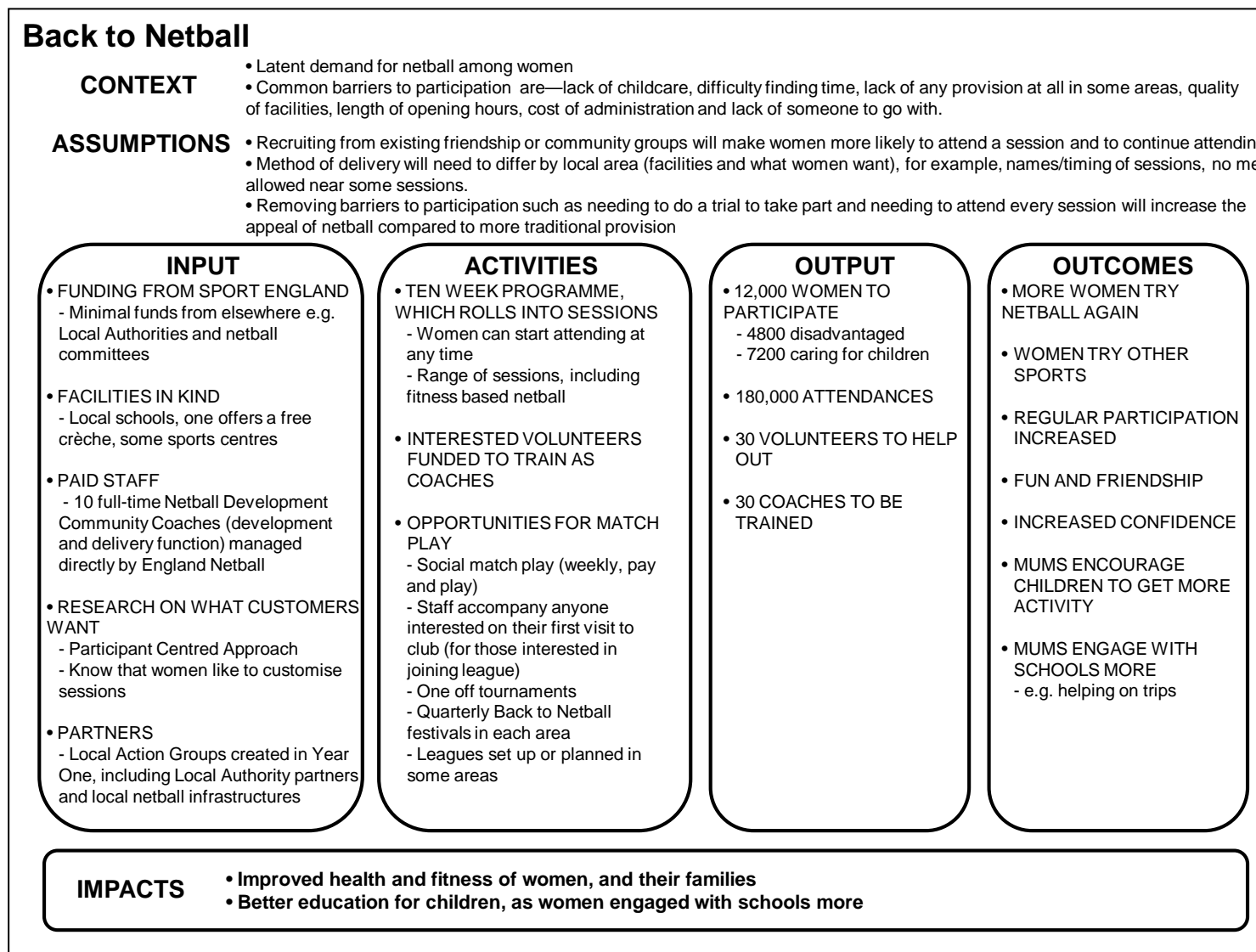


Figure 9.2 Logic Model: B-inspired

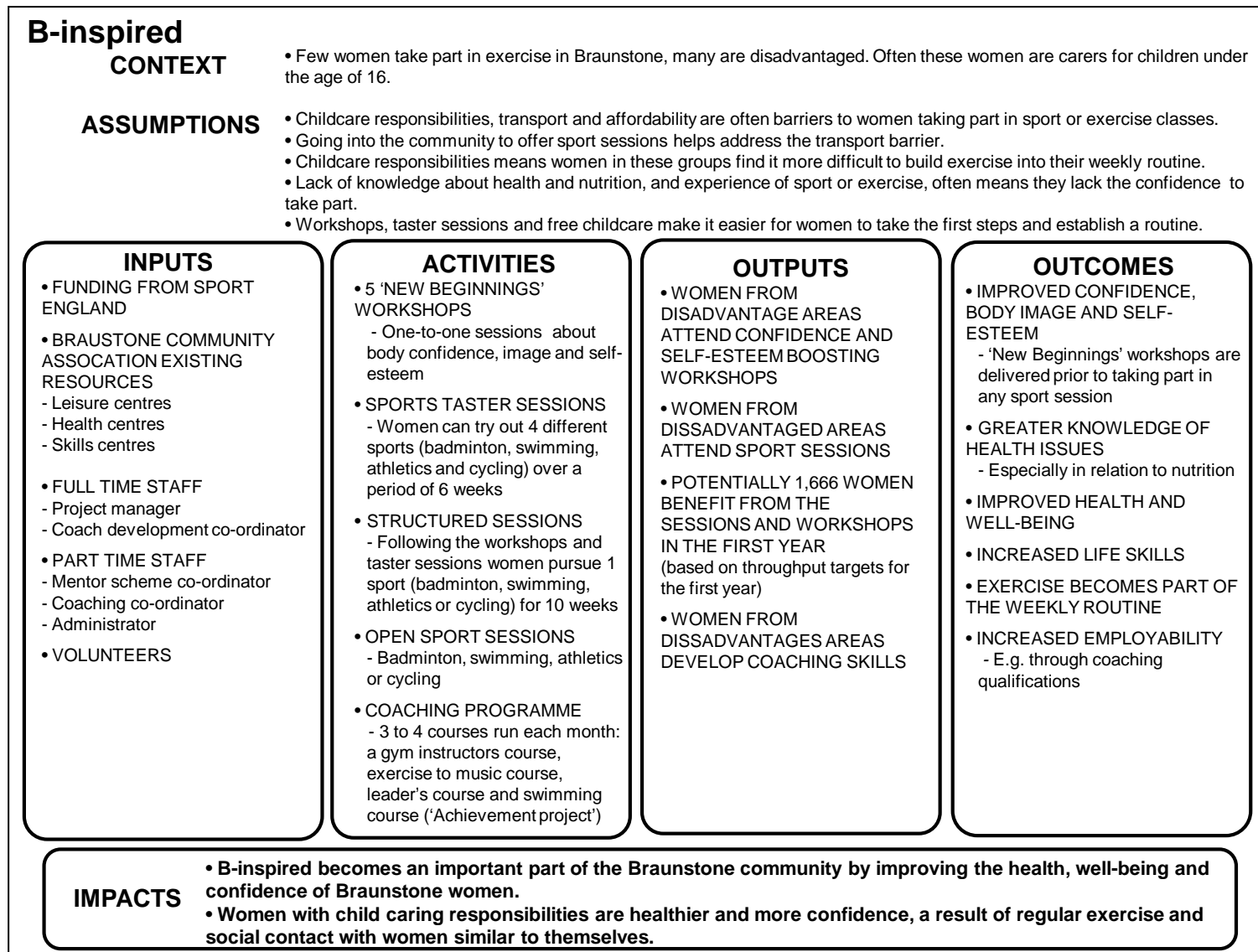


Figure 9.3 Logic Model: Breeze

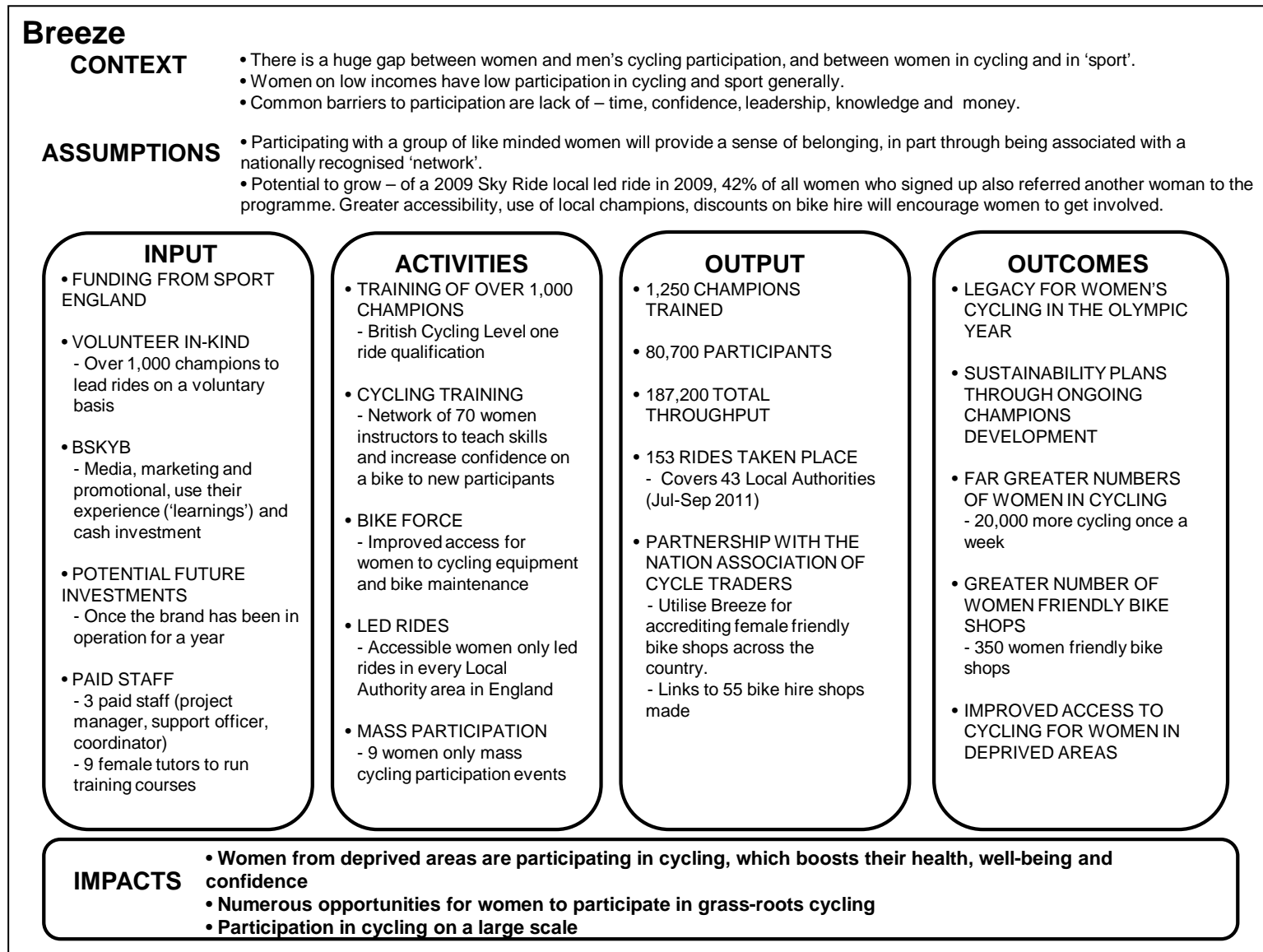


Figure 9.4 Logic Model: East Durham Belles

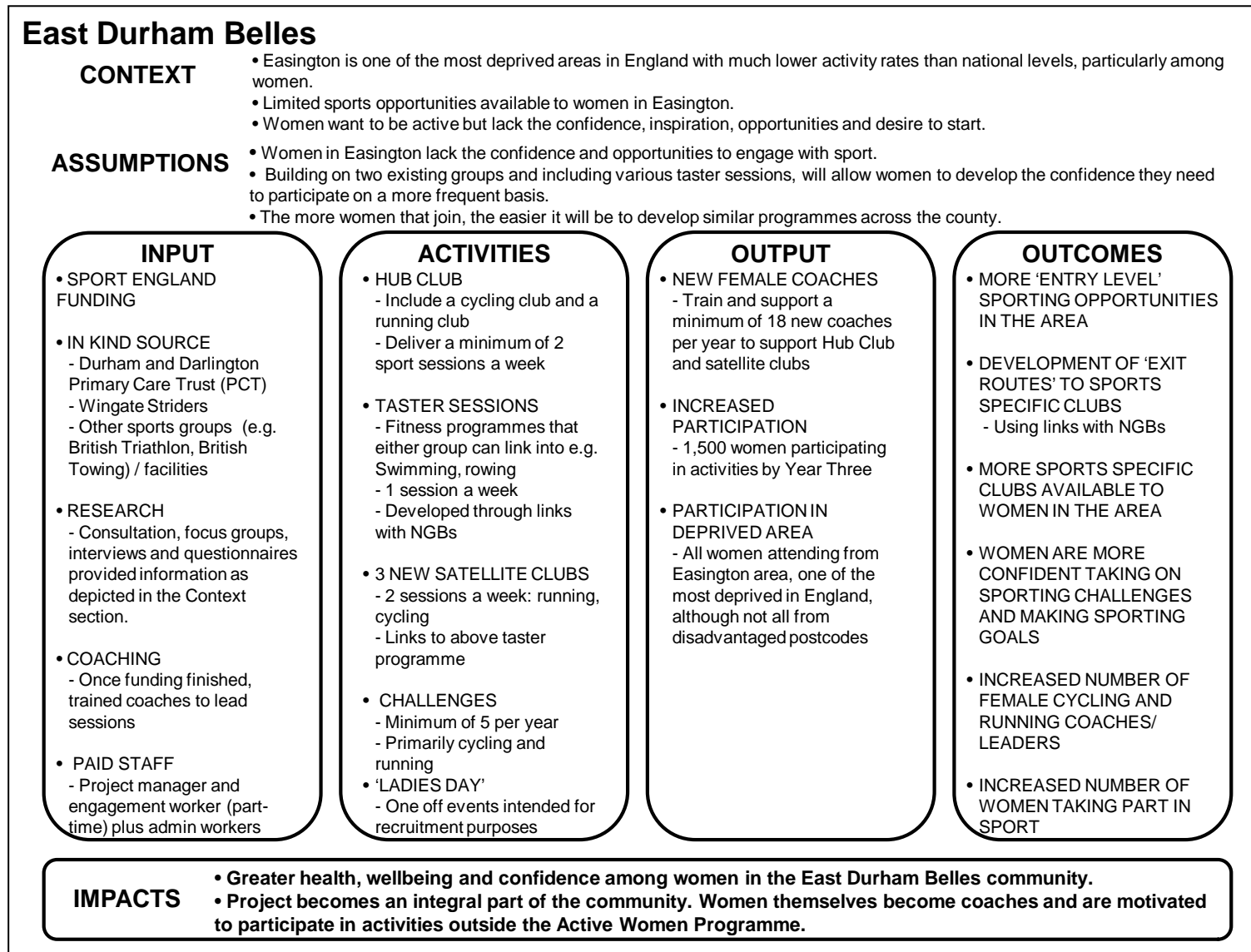


Figure 9.5 Logic Model: Sport4Women

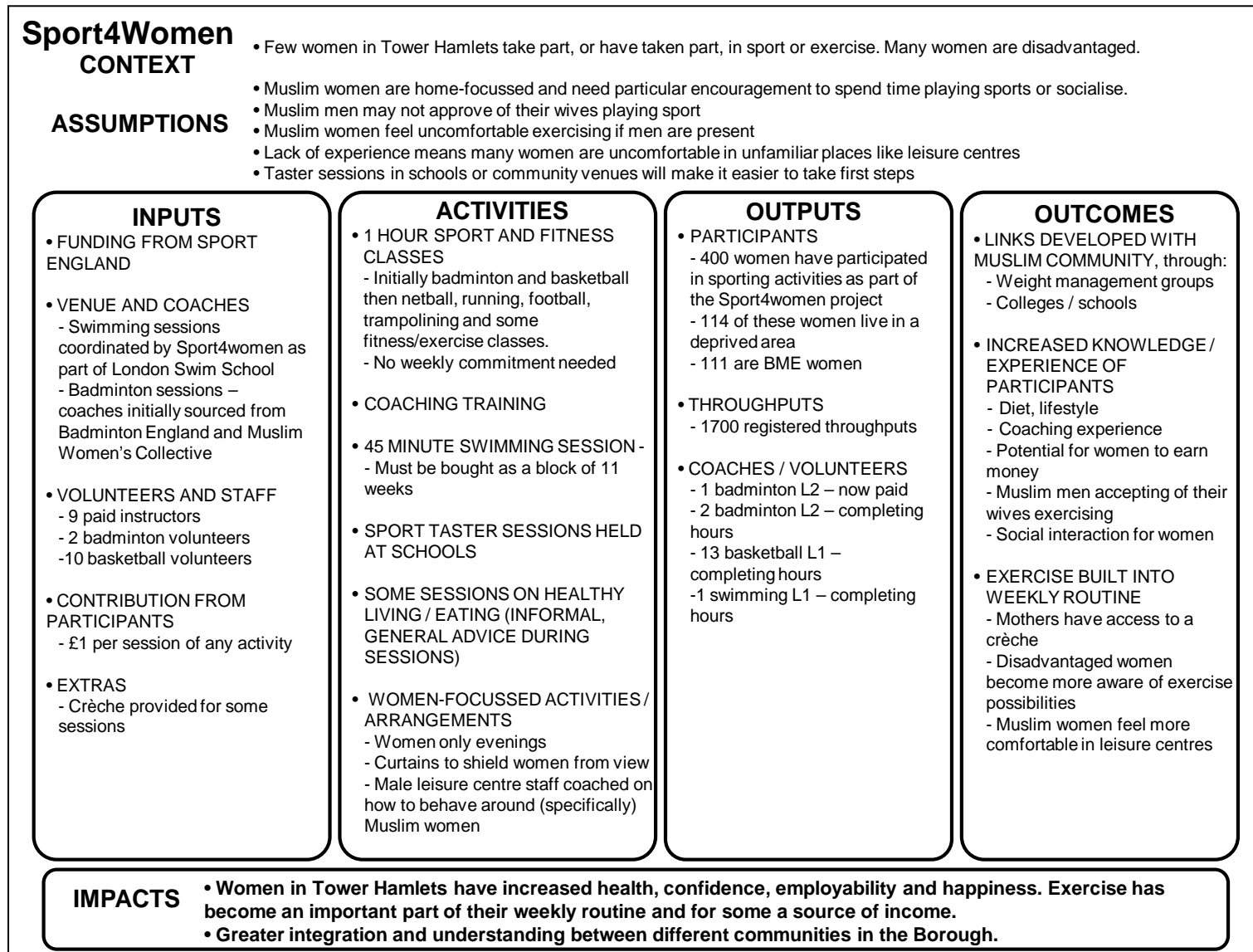


Figure 9.6 Logic Model: Think Fit

