



Press Release

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New campaign to give women more confidence to exercise

- Research shows two million fewer women than men are active, but 75 per cent want to do more.
- Fear of judgement is the primary barrier for women.
- Women of all shapes, sizes and abilities celebrated for the first time in high profile national campaign to give women the confidence to do more sport and exercise.

A bold new campaign set to tackle head on the barriers that stop millions of women being more active has been launched today (Monday 12 January).

Led by Sport England, the This Girl Can campaign is the first of its kind to feature women of all shapes, sizes and sporting abilities that sweat and jiggle as they exercise. It seeks to tell the real story of women who exercise and play sport by using images that are the complete opposite of the idealised and stylised images of women we are now used to seeing.

The campaign doesn't hold back in trying to encourage women to beat their barriers.

"Sweating like a pig, feeling like a fox" and *"I kick balls, deal with it"* are among the hard hitting lines used in the campaign to prompt a change in attitudes and help boost women's confidence.

This Girl Can will use prime time TV advertising, billboards and cinema and shopping centre screens to put images of real women exercising on the national stage and use social media to start a debate about attitudes to female sport.

It comes as research, carried out by Sport England, reveals that by every measure, fewer women than men play sport regularly - two million fewer 14-40 year olds in total. Despite this, 75 per cent say they want to be more active. In some other European countries, this disparity doesn't exist.

Further research into what's stopping women turning their ambitions into reality found that a fear of judgement - on appearance, ability or how they chose to spend time on themselves - puts women of all ages off exercising.

The findings were the driving force behind the campaign's creation, which aims to empower women and encourage more to get active.

Sport England CEO, Jennie Price, said: "The figures on participation are crystal clear. There is a significant gender gap, with two million more men than women exercising or playing sport regularly. I believe we can tackle this gap, because our research shows that 75% of women would like to do more.

"Before we began this campaign, we looked very carefully at what women were saying about why they felt sport and exercise was not for them. Some of the issues, like time and cost, were familiar, but one of the strongest themes was a fear of judgement. Worries about being judged for being the wrong size, not fit enough and not skilled enough came up time and again. Every single woman I have talked to about this campaign – and that is now hundreds – has identified with this, and it is that fear of not being 'good enough' in some way, and the fear that you are the only one who feels like that, that we want to address.

"In This Girl Can we want to tell the real story of women who exercise and play sport. They come in all shapes and sizes and all levels of ability. They have a myriad of reasons for doing what they do. If you are wondering if you should join them – or carry on – this campaign says it really doesn't matter if you are a bit rubbish or completely brilliant, the main thing is that you are a woman and you are doing something, and that deserves to be celebrated."

The campaign celebrates women who have found their own ways of breaking down their barriers. The women featuring in the campaign include:

Victoria

Victoria, 29, is a paediatric nurse in A&E, from East London. While a lot of girls say that getting sweaty isn't feminine, Victoria isn't one of them. In fact, Victoria is proud of getting hot, red faced and sweaty. She said: "At first sweating may seem gross, but getting sweaty and red-faced shows your body's working hard and that's something to be proud of, not worry about. You have to put your shoulders back and hold your head high when you leave the gym or finish a run because having a sweaty face shows you've achieved something. It gives me more energy as well - I have to fit exercise around shift work because I'm a nurse and I often do a spin class before a night shift because it sets me up for what's ahead."

Kelly

Kelly, 31, is a single working mum of three from Bury, near Manchester. Kelly has found a distinct way to fit exercise into her life since she had her third child – by working out at home, with her children. Kelly said: "After I had my third child I just felt sluggish, I didn't have any energy. I was due to go back to work and didn't feel good about myself and that gave me the kick-start I needed to find a way to prioritise getting active. I make exercise a family affair. My kids are part of the workout routine – we put on music or a DVD and just go for it together. It doesn't feel like a pain to do it because it's fun, and part of our life, and I really hope it has a positive effect on how my children view exercise as they grow up, so being active won't feel like a chore, but just something they naturally do."

Plans to launch the campaign were announced towards the end of 2014 and it is already resonating with thousands of women through social media. As part of the campaign, Sport England is working with sports bodies, local authorities and companies across England to make sure they're providing sporting opportunities that meet the needs of women inspired by the campaign.

For more about This Girl Can, go to thisgirlcan.co.uk where you can find out about the women in the campaign, get tips on how to get active and join the national debate.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For more information about This Girl Can, including campaign imagery, video footage, and interview requests with the girls that feature in the campaign, please contact the team at Blue Rubicon on behalf of Sport England on 020 7260 2700 and ask for Toby Partlett, Olivia Blunt, Susie Flynn, Faye Williamson or Laura Gainsford.

The first TV advert will appear on ITV at approximately 19:45 tonight (Monday 12 January 2014). Billboard adverts will appear across the country from Monday 19 January.

This Girl Can is funded by the National Lottery.

Research and insight behind This Girl Can

Sports participation

- 6.8m women in England play sport once a week
- 8.8m men in England play sport once a week
- 75 per cent of women want to play more sport than they currently do

Source: Sport England's Active People Survey.

- The UK is 3rd out of 27 European countries when it comes to boys participating in sport. For girls, it's 19th.

Source: Eurobarometer Special Surveys sport and physical activity report.

Fear of judgement

We reviewed existing research and talked to real women of all ages, right across the country, to find out what is holding them back from exercising more. We identified a fresh and unifying insight - the fear of judgement. Whether it's fear of judgement about appearance, ability, or for spending time on yourself rather than with family, the fear of judgement outweighs women's confidence to exercise. It is the fear of judgement which is causing the divide between women wanting to exercise, but not having the confidence to do it.

Appearance: Right from an early age, appearance is a concern for women when it comes to exercise. 36 per cent of the least active girls agreed that they felt like their body was on show in PE, and that this made them like PE less, [WSFF, *Changing the Game for Girls*] and 1 in 4 women say they "hate the way I look when I exercise or play sport" [WSFF *It's Time*

report] – women are most likely to say they aren't confident about their body when doing sport. [*Active People Survey 6*].

Ability: Again, from an early age, ability is a concern for women. Over a quarter of girls say they don't feel that they have the skills to do well in sport. [WSFF, *Changing the Game for Girls*] Confidence in their skills is lower amongst girls who are less physically active. [WSFF, *Changing the Game for Girls*] Women also tend to have a more conservative view on their abilities than men and are particularly negative about their running speed, whereas men are over optimistic about their hand-eye coordination with over half thinking they are better than average. [*Active People Survey 6*] 33 per cent of say they feel too unfit to get fit, [WSFF *It's Time* report] and 48 per cent of girls say that getting sweaty is not feminine. [WSFF, *Changing the Game for Girls*]

Family: Many mums would like to exercise, but the fear of being judged for putting yourself first is a barrier. 81 per cent of mothers with children under 15 prioritise spending time with their families over getting fit, [*She Moves* research] and 44 per cent of mums say they feel guilty if they spend time on themselves. [*She Moves* research] 22 per cent of young mums are active once a week which is below the national average of 31 per cent, [At least once a week sports participation from Sport England's *Active People* results for the 12 months to April 2014] but 72 per cent of inactive young mums would like to participate in sport and exercise more. [At least once a week sports participation from Sport England's *Active People* results for the 12 months to April 2014]

About Sport England

Sport England is focused on helping people and communities across the country create a sporting habit for life. We will invest over £1 billion of National Lottery and Exchequer funding between 2012 and 2017 in organisations and projects that will:

- Help more people have a sporting habit for life
- Create more opportunities for young people to play sport
- Nurture and develop talent
- Provide the right facilities in the right places
- Support local authorities and unlock local funding
- Ensure real opportunities for communities.

The National Lottery has been changing lives for 20 years. Every week National Lottery players raise over £30 million to help change people's lives across the UK.

For more information please contact the press office: Andrew St Ledger on 020 7273 1800 or andrew.stledger@sportengland.org; Amy Wright on 0207 273 1593 or amy.wright@sportengland.org; Chris Dowsett on 020 7273 1889 or chris.dowsett@sportengland.org

