**THURSDAY 10 JUNE 2021**

**This Girl Can launches “This Girl Can Week” to inspire women to return to activity after lockdown**

* *After over a year of disruption and women’s activity levels decreasing, the This Girl Can campaign is back with a dedicated week to inspire and encourage women to get active*
* *New research from Sport England reveals that women have struggled to keep or return to their activity habits during the coronavirus pandemic*
* *While 61% of men say the pandemic has given them more time to exercise, only 54% of women say the same*
* *Running from 12th – 19th June, ‘This Girl Can Week’ celebrates how getting active, in all forms, can make women feel happier, stronger, and healthier*
* *Strictly Come Dancing’s Karen Hauer is backing the campaign and available for interview on Monday 14th June*

This Girl Can, Sport England’s award-winning campaign, is launching the first ‘This Girl Can Week’ from 12th – 19th June. The week is calling on women to choose themselves and take the time to get active.

Following a year of widespread disruption the week is a response to Sport England’s new research that reveals that women have struggled to maintain their activity habits during the Covid-19 pandemic.

While two thirds of women agree it has become even more important to keep active throughout the pandemic, women have had less time than men to be physically active. While 61% of men say the pandemic has given them more time to exercise, only 54% of women say the same. One of the reasons for this is that women take on more domestic responsibilities than men, which has been exacerbated by lockdown restrictions. While 16% of women list childcare as a reason why they are unable to prioritise time for exercise, only 7% of men did so.

Further data reveals the most prevalent barriers preventing women from being active are feeling too tired (42%), not feeling fit enough (25%), work commitments (25%) and worries over COVID-19 (14%).

However, the data also reveals the importance women place on exercise as a tool for managing their physical health (66%) and mental health (64%) during the pandemic. The purpose of This Girl Can Week is to inspire all women across the country to put their own needs first so they too can enjoy the felt benefits of exercise.

**Kate Dale, This Girl Can Campaign Lead, said:** “As our insight shows, the last year has been difficult for women when it comes to doing something for themselves, particularly when it comes to getting physically active. With continued barriers such as childcare commitments and not feeling fit enough or good enough, This Girl Can aims to frame exercise in a way that highlights every benefit we can all get from moving more, like feeling healthier, better mental and emotional health, flexibility, building strength and – most importantly – having fun.

“Through our first-ever This Girl Can Week, we want to inspire and encourage women to be more active. No matter your shape, size, or ability, now is the time to choose you and celebrate moving your body in whatever way makes you feel good.”

During the week, This Girl Can will encourage women across the country to ‘choose you’ and find a way to get active that works for them and makes them feel good. The week will put the spotlight on women and exercise, celebrating how getting active can make women feel happier, stronger, and free.

Whether it’s a brisk walk, a slow run, a trip to the pool or a dance round the living room with friends – it all counts. This Girl Can is calling on women across the country to celebrate and share choosing themselves and getting active during the week with the #ThisGirlCan.”

**This Girl Can Week ambassador Karen Hauer said:** “I’m delighted to support the This Girl Can Week and help the campaign continue to break down the barriers that make women feel like they can’t get active.”

“The Week is an important reminder that every woman should have the freedom to put their own needs first and get active in a way that suits them. Getting active for yourself doesn’t have to be about having the newest equipment or masses of space – whether it’s dancing around your living room with friends or a quick walk round the block, if it gets your heart rate up and your body moving then you’re doing it right!”

ENDS

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

For additional information or to book an interview with any of the below spokespeople and case studies, please email [ThisGirlCan@redconsultancy.com](mailto:ThisGirlCan@redconsultancy.com)

Available for interview to discuss This Girl Can Week and the barriers women face when it comes to exercise, we have:

* **Kate Dale, This Girl Can Campaign Lead**
* **Lisa O’Keefe, Director of Insight at Sport England**
* **Karen Hauer, This Girl Can Week ambassador**

As well as This Girl Can’s inspiring case studies who can discuss their own experiences of keeping active during the pandemic:

* **Aneesa Dawojee,** 43 from South London, is a mum of two and professional freelance photographer. After losing her salary due to lockdown, she started feeling uncertain and fearful for the future. When an old personal trainer reached out to her about Zoom MMA classes, Aneesa began doing them solo as well as with her kids which not only helped her gain confidence but also improved her mental wellbeing.
* **Kanza Ahmed** – 37-year-old Kanza Ahmed from Birmingham has been taking part in Bhangra classes for three years. She works in the NHS as an Epidemiologist and was incredibly busy during the peak of Covid, making the Zoom classes even more important in bringing a sense of normality and fun.
* **Charm Daley** – 43 from Nottingham, runs her own Zumba classes that were hugely impacted during lockdown. Like the rest of the country, Charm adapted and moved her classes online and now runs two outdoor classes a week.
* **Liz Wright** – 35 from Bristol, is an amputee who has tried loads of different ways to stay active, with and without her kids. In the end, swimming with her community has been the thing that has kept her motivated. She has taken on and completed the challenge of swimming the length of a marathon (26.2 miles) to raise money for the Open Bionics Foundation in the past, a charity very close to her heart.
* **Glynis Evans** – 31 from Essex, has a physical disability but that doesn’t stop her when it comes to the pool. Glynis fell in love with swimming in primary school but has found it harder to fit into her life and her confidence in the pool fell. Joining an accessible group at her local gym has helped reignite Glynis’ love of swimming and has encouraged her to stick with it.
* **Sophia Kapcia –** 40 from Birmingham, is a mother of 5 young girls who always finds time to exercise amongst all her other commitments.
* **Laura Earl –** 32 from Carlisle, is a mother to 4 young children. During the first lockdown Laura was on her own with three young children and a newborn but still committed to an hour of activity everyday outside and now runs a website advising parents on how to stay active with young kids.

Support This Girl Can on Twitter using the hashtag #ThisGirlCan

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thisgirlcanuk/>

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**About Sport England**

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport. It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That’s why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people, and people on lower incomes.

**About This Girl Can**

Since 2015, Sport England has been working to address the significant gender gap found in sports and exercise, to build women’s confidence around being active, and help them meet the Chief Medical Officers’ guidance. The campaign was based on the insight that 75% of women say they want to do more sporting activities or exercise, but one of the unifying barriers found to be holding them back is a fear of judgement. This Girl Can’s objective is to encourage women to engage in physical activity regardless of shape, size, age, or ability.

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