

## **Campaigns: what we've learned from evaluation, 2015–20**

This paper from 2021 summarises notable learning from evaluation of our campaigning work over 2015–20. It offers insight on why and how we develop campaigns to motivate people to be more physically active. It comes from learning from across our campaign work. It is not exhaustive nor absolute but provides the prominent learning as we see it.

The Sport England campaigns which have been used to develop this learning include:

- This Girl Can – aimed at women aged 14–60
- We Are Undefeatable – aimed at people with long term health conditions
- Join The Movement – aimed at the nation to keep moving during lockdown

### **Why should Sport England be a campaigning organisation?**

To achieve our vision, we want everyone in England regardless of their age, background or level of ability to feel able to take part in activity and be inspired and motivated to get active. Our campaigns help to inspire and motivate specific audiences to be physically active, at a scale and reach which would be unachievable through more traditional programmes.

However, our campaigns are not simply thought-provoking ads that appear on TV! There is always other work that supports and is supported by the campaign. To achieve the objective of getting more people active the campaigns directly talk to the target audience but also offer a platform for discussions with partners and the sector to improve the customer journey and experience.

### **Our approach to developing a campaign**

#### **1. Understanding the target audience through insight**

The success of our campaigns is down to the fact that they are truly insight driven, and that by following the insight we are prepared to create campaigns which challenge the status quo. Before we embark on any campaign, we use qualitative research to understand the target audience in terms of their experiences and perspectives, whether that be women or people with long-term health conditions. Using data from Active Lives and other sources of quantitative and qualitative research we discover what is stopping people from being more active – what fears do they have?, What would motivate them to think about being more active?.

#### **2. Developing a campaign**

By using insight and taking time to properly understand the audience it means we can develop a unifying theme (e.g. fear of judgement for women) to develop the campaign around. This makes all the campaign messaging clear which helps to engage with multiple audiences and stakeholders e.g. the target audience, press, influencers, policymakers. We work with agencies to develop campaigns that directly speak to those fears and motivations and are emotionally engaging for the target audience. We test any materials that are developed with the target audience to ensure they resonate with them (and not what we think would work). We listen to what the target audience is telling us and act upon this feedback.

Our campaigns are emotionally engaging and relatable to the target audience. One approach which has been successful in achieving this is to use real people and their authentic stories in our campaigns. We use the stories to promote people getting active in a way that is right for them. The tone of the campaign is also important to get right – we want to motivate not preach, push boundaries while having a lightness of touch.

### **3. Execution**

The aim of the campaign messaging that is built on insight is to motivate and inspire the target audience to be more active. It is essential that the campaign reaches as many people as possible in the target audience. This means promoting the campaign over channels that are relevant for the target audience. Having the ad on TV helps to drive reach and scale. Having the campaign appear on multiple channels (e.g. TV, digital, out of home, social media) ensures that the messaging is being reinforced and creates a bigger buzz around the campaign and its messaging. We adopt a principle of go where the target audience is, in terms of media-consumption, rather than where we want them to be.

We also need to make sure that those who influence our target audience (partners, parents, children, carers, friends) hear or see the messaging as they have an influence on attitudes and behaviour too. We need a blended approach that combines targeting with mass communication.

### **Using the campaign as a platform for the sector and partners**

Developing the campaign to motivate the target audience is only part of the picture. We work collaboratively with the sector and partners to ensure the campaign messaging is amplified, translates into improving customer experiences and target audiences are encouraged and supported with being physically active by trusted sources.

#### **1. Partners amplify the campaign**

We work collaboratively with a variety of partners to amplify our campaigns and their messaging. Here is some of our learning that ensures we support partners in this:

- Develop a community that can get behind the campaign – partners that understand and agree with what the campaign is saying.
- Give partners enough time for them to successfully buy-into and support the campaign.
- Be specific in our ask to partners to ensure we get the desired results, and tailor asks to different types of partners.
- Provide the right depth of information and resources to support partners to develop their own local or targeted campaigns to amplify our campaign. For example, create a bank of sharable social assets that partners can use across their own channels; and share our insights that have developed the campaign messaging. Partners can then create their own content, build local buy-in and increase reach and visibility of the campaign.
- Position the campaign as an asset for partners to use and support their own organisation's objectives.
- Be in regular contact with partners to share new resources and plans.
- We have worked closely with specific partners to develop our understanding of how to effectively support partners to amplify our campaigns and messaging. This has resulted in improving our understanding of how local or target campaigns can be most effective.

Campaign sustainability and scale can be achieved through collaborative partnership working. By working collaboratively with partners, we can develop a sense of shared and collective ownership for a campaign. This approach helps to amplify the campaign messaging but also enables the campaign to be more targeted and sustainable in the long-term.

## **2. Campaigns as part of a whole system approach**

Looking at the “whole system” enables Sport England to integrate other work to support the campaign activity. For example, using programme funding and policy advocacy to help remove systemic barriers to support the target audience to be more active alongside the campaign. By taking a whole systems approach increases the longer-term impact of our campaigns.

A whole system approach also drives opportunities to open new doors with non-traditional partners and a broader spectrum of stakeholders. Being evidence-led and retaining the relevance and popularity of our campaigns has enabled us to have broader discussions with stakeholders that impact on the system as whole. Some of these stakeholders have included policymakers, MPs, social and health

care charities, healthcare professionals. The campaigns have enabled, and continue to enable, these discussions at both a national and local level, through us and our partners.

### **3. Improved customer experiences of being active**

To increase the impact of campaigns we use them to influence partners to improve the opportunities that are available to our target audiences to be physically active. We work collaboratively with a variety of partners who can:

- Provide opportunities that address the needs of the target audience – this may include providing specific classes or physical activity offers. We prioritise projects that can work at scale and are relevant (either through the reached audience or by addressing the needs of the target audience).
- Improving the information about what is on offer to our target audience – understanding what is holding back our target audience helps us to be clearer on what information to provide about a class or physical activity offer.
- Develop the workforce – equipping staff and coaches to support our target audiences, and therefore provide a more positive experience.
- Innovation – working with non-traditional partners to be innovative in the way we meet target audiences' needs and tackle barriers to participation.

### **4. Commercial partnerships**

Sport England also works with commercial/brand partners to amplify campaign messaging and provide opportunities for target groups to get active. Our key learnings from this work involve:

- Having brands that fit with the campaign – listening to our community about their views on specific partnerships
- Taking time to understand and explore insights together about the target audience and how the Sport England campaign and the brand partner can work together.
- Flexible – finding the right opportunity for the brand partner is key to its success.
- Amplification – brand partners can help us to amplify the campaign messaging, potentially reaching new and different audiences through the brand partners channels.

### **How our campaigns support behaviour change**

Over this strategy period we have learnt that our campaigns do inspire audiences to be active. However, this isn't sufficient – we need to use our campaigns as a

means of improving the system – whether that be working with leisure operators to improve their offer to women or supporting healthcare professionals to encourage physical activity amongst people with long term health conditions. Activating and changing the system takes longer than producing a campaign but when we combine the campaign with activation or support for broader stakeholders, we have greater impact.

Framing Sport England’s campaigns against the COM-B model we can identify where different aspects of our campaign work have impact on individual behavior change:

Motivation	The campaigns inspire and motivate target audiences to be more active
Capability	Using real people in our campaigns increases relatability for our target audience – “if they can do that then so can I”. Having partners who are trusted by the target audience (e.g. healthcare professionals, health and social care charities) advocate the benefits of being physically active, increases people’s perception of their ability to be active.
Opportunity	Working with partners in the Sport and Physical Activity sector to improve the physical activity offer and a customer’s experience.

However, any behaviour change takes time and considerable reinforcement. Therefore, it is important that when planning campaign activity, we think long-term and plan further ahead and build longer-term partnerships.

## **The impact of our campaigns**

Our campaigns have positively impacted upon our target audiences. For example:

### *Reported action in response to the campaigns*

Target groups have reported taking action directly in response to our campaigns. For example:

- Three in ten women have taken an action as a result of the This Girl Can campaign (Kantar Tracker, Wave 19);
- 56% of people who were aware of the We Are Undefeatable Campaign have taken an action as a result of the campaign (DJS Tracker, Wave 3); and
- 25% of people report taking an action as a result of Join the Movement campaign.

### *Attitudes in response to the campaigns:*

- There have been changes in women's attitudes around physical activity since the launch of the This Girl Can campaign. For example, there has been an increase in women agreeing that women like them are doing sport and exercise (43% in November 2014 increased to 53% in November 2019 – Kantar tracker); and similar increases in women agreeing that they feel comfortable in themselves when exercising (48% in November 2014 to 59% in November 2019).
- 52% of people with health conditions felt inspired to be more active as a result of the We Are Undefeatable campaign (DJS Tracker, Wave 3)
- 73% of adults agreed that the Join The Movement adverts showed people that they could still stay active during the COVID-19 lockdown and 40% felt inspired to get active

#### *Population level change in activity levels:*

- The number of women playing sport and getting active once a week, every week increased by 250,000 following the launch of This Girl Can (Sport England Active People survey, October 2016). This increase in women's participation occurred while men's activity levels remained the same.

### **Sport England brand and reputation**

Our campaign work has had a positive impact on a variety of stakeholders views towards Sport England despite none of the campaigns being developed with this being the main focus. However, our ability to respond, innovate and create behaviour change has reinforced the organisation's credibility and extended its influence in the sport and physical activity sector and beyond both within England and internationally. For example:

- Join the Movement has provided the sector with materials and messaging to support physical activity through lockdown. Our collaborative working has built trust with the sector and supported them at a time of crisis.
- This Girl Can has over 16,0000 supporters who use the materials to effect change within their own communities; it has also connected with an army of advocates and influencers from MPs to beauty bloggers, journalists to celebrities who write and talk positively and extensively about the campaign. These connections are vital if we are to reach and support under-represented groups.
- Recognition from Government about the quality of our campaigning work and a closer dialogue with different departments (e.g. Foreign Office, DfE and DfID) about what they can learn from our campaign work.
- Denmark, India, Japan, New Zealand, the US and Australia are just some of the countries that we have shared our insight and expertise with; and a

localised version of the This Girl Can campaign is now running in Victoria Australia, licensed to VicHealth.