**Come and do your worst”: first-ever This Girl Can Classes launched with nationwide rollout early next year**

* Lower-intensity, fun and designed to build confidence in less active women, the classes from This Girl Can and EMD UK aim to engage women who don’t feel confident to attend group exercise classes - or have had negative experiences at them in the past
* The classes are designed to dismantle barriers that women face to taking part in group exercise. Over a third (38%) of women worry about not being fit enough, 28% worry about showing their body and almost a quarter (24%) worry that they aren’t good enough.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* Over 1500 instructors have registered their interest in running the classes, with major fitness operators like Places Leisure and Mytime Active signed up too
* Women's pre-pandemic activity levels are recovering more slowly than men's, with the [latest Active Lives survey](https://www.sportengland.org/news/sport-and-physical-activity-must-be-used-level-and-tackle-inequalities) from Sport England finding that were 300,000 fewer active women in the period from May 2020 to May 2021

Sport England’s [This Girl Can campaign](https://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/) has partnered with EMD UK, the national governing body for group exercise, [to launch the first-ever This Girl Can Classes.](https://thisgirlcanclasses.co.uk/)

Lower-intensity and fun, and “where getting it wrong is totally alright”, they are designed to appeal to women who may feel intimidated by the idea of group exercise or have had a previous negative experience at a group exercise class.

The classes - that call on women to “Come and do your worst” - will become available across the country in 2022 as more instructors are trained up. So far, over 1500 people have registered their interest to train as class instructors and 21 leisure operators have signed up to host This Girl Can Classes. Community instructors will play an important role, with the classes designed to be able to be held in community halls and other local spaces, as well as in leisure settings

This Girl Can classes were designed after six months of consultation with focus groups of less active women, who explained what the barriers that stopped them from taking part in fitness classes were - and what would make them want to attend. Women make up 84% of attendees of group exercise classes in a leisure environment[[2]](#footnote-3); they are one of the most popular activities for women to take part in. However, research by EMD UK reveals that some less active women often express fears of being judged in fitness classes, of looking “stupid”, of not being able to keep up, fear of what others will think and being out of their depth in a group exercise setting.~~[[3]](#footnote-4)~~

This Girl Can classes are designed to tackle these barriers, by offering a blended taster of different types of exercise and activities each week, such as dance fitness, box fitness, and yoga-inspired stretch. The classes are gentle and lower-intensity so that all women feel able to take part, which supports women to decide what they enjoy and what style of activity works best for them - regardless of fitness levels and experience.

Class instructors are trained to create a warm, fun and supportive environment and build confidence to help women “graduate” onto other classes when they feel they’re ready. This means that This Girl Can Classes continue to be for women who are new to getting active and want similar things from a class experience. The classes have been designed to be able to be used as part of social prescribing schemes in the future too.

**Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England CEO said:**

“Despite the enormous progress we have made with supporting more women to get active in recent years, the gender gap for activity stubbornly persists,” he explained.

“It’s never been more important; getting active boosts mental and physical health, helps manage anxiety and stress and creates social ties – but millions of women are missing out on these benefits. Fitness providers were approaching Sport England to say that they felt that This Girl Can – with its ethos of fun and empowerment, regardless of ability  – was the ideal brand and campaign to appeal to less active women who need their confidence built up.

“It’s an exciting moment for us and the fitness and physical activity sector, and we will support EMD UK to roll out This Girl Can classes all over the country by early next year.”

**Shelley Meyern, Head of Operations and Projects at EMD UK says,**

“This has been a brilliant project to work on due to the enthusiasm and appetite from operators, instructors and the women that the classes have been designed for. From the physical and mental benefits that being active can bring, to the social connections we can make, every woman deserves to feel the benefits of getting active. At This Girl Can Classes, you can be reassured that there are no wrong moves, and everyone can take it at their own pace. We want women to come and do their worst.”

**ENDS**

To find out more, go to: <https://thisgirlcanclasses.co.uk/>

Watch a video of a class in action here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tE9r6CtR9Lw>

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

For additional information, please email media.team@sportengland.org

**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**

Launched in 2015, This Girl Can is Sport England’s nationwide campaign to build women and girls’ confidence to be active, regardless of shape, size and ability – by celebrating them getting active on their own terms.

It’s based on insight that 75% of women say they want to do more sport or exercise, but research shows they are persistently less active than men. A fear of being judged was one of the top barriers holding them back. And research shows that Covid-19 has made it even harder for women and girls to be active, with women struggling more than men to return to sport or activity. We want to tackle the gender activity gap, challenge conventional ideas of what women exercising look like and connect with women of all backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities who might feel that getting active isn’t for them.  So far, This Girl Can has inspired nearly 4 million women to engage with getting active in their own way - no matter how they look, how well they do it or how sweaty they get.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ThisGirlCanUK>

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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ThisGirlCanUK/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/thisgirlcanuk>

**About EMD UK**

EMD UK is the national governing body for group exercise, dedicated to achieving a vision of a healthier communities through group exercise. We work with instructors, operators and organisations across the sector to provide help, support and advice and to ensure that group exercise continues to inspire people of all ages and abilities to take part in physical activity.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ExerciseMoveDanceUK>

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

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1. Walnut, This Girl Can Report 2021, 1077 women surveyed age 14-60 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Moving Communities Report, May-June 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. EMD UK research, 2CV focus groups 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)