

SECTION 4:

RUNNING YOUR SESSIONS

If you've done a good job with your marketing and communications you should have women and girls keen to attend your sessions. It's crucial that the experience meets their expectations, lives up to promises you made in your marketing and delivers what they require from sport and physical activity. This isn't about rebranding what you already have, but delivering what will truly appeal to your local women and girls and increase attendance.



HOW DO I GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO HELP?

Working in partnership with other people and organisations is a very effective way of:

- Increasing the awareness of your activities.
- Encouraging people to attend/take part in your activities.
- Potentially increasing support resources at your activities.

1 WHO SHOULD YOU LOOK TO PARTNER WITH?

It is important, for the good of any partnership, that you work with appropriate people/ organisations. A partner should:

- Help to get women active.
- Have values that reflect your own.
- Have a presence in your local area and a similar target audience.
- Assist in raising public awareness of your activities (perhaps through promoting you in their own marketing and communications, including social media).
- Potentially help to plan and deliver your new programme of events, or provide a link to a sport or physical activity.

Partners could include: local retailers, banks, cafés, leisure centre operators or local media.

2 HOW DO YOU SECURE THEM AS PARTNERS?

The easiest way of securing partners is to use your existing network of contacts, whether that's current partners, people you know or possibly even work colleagues. You should ensure that any written approach, whether you know the person or not, is short and concise (no more than two A4 pages) and covers:

- Who you are and why you are approaching them.
- What you would like from them or how they can lend support, such as:
 - Promoting your activities in their offices/shops, on their website or social media channels.
 - Providing staff to attend or help run activities.

- What you can offer partners in return for their support. (Note: Obviously make sure that these are appropriate to the organisation and that you can deliver them):
 - Free places for staff to attend activities.
 - A hyperlink to their website from your own site.
 - Coverage/content on social media.
 - Access to logos, images and content for them to use in their marketing materials.
- Next steps, phone call or face-to-face meeting.

HOW DO I GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO HELP?

3 ASK PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER

- The right people with the right skills are key to delivering successful sessions. While volunteers don't have to be sporty they do need to have the right knowledge, skills and attitude to deliver your sessions. You also need to consider why someone is volunteering and ensure that their motivations are met. It's also important to make sure that the volunteer feels supported and valued.
- Where can I find the right volunteers? [Click here](#) **This good practice guide** from The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) takes you through the stages of successful recruitment. There are also lots on online 'matching services' where you can advertise volunteering opportunities and find the right people. Here are three of the most popular services:
 1. [Click here](#) **Join in**
 2. [Click here](#) **Do-it**
 3. [Click here](#) **NCVO**

In addition, the Sainsbury's Inclusive Community Training Programme provides training for those who support local disabled people into physical activity. [Click here](#) **Learn more here.**
- Working in partnership is the best way to get results. Consider contacting colleges, universities and local community groups (such as Girl Guides and the Women's Institute) to offer your volunteering opportunities – they are often looking for ways to get in touch with community projects. Volunteers don't need to be sporty to support sport and physical activity. [Click here](#) to learn more about various volunteering myths.
- County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) are networks of local agencies working together to increase participation in sport and physical activity. They are experienced at dealing with volunteer requirements, can provide guidance and support and help you find and retain volunteers. [Click here](#) to learn more about CSPs.
- Don't forget to seek volunteers from your own sessions and make clear what you need a hand with, and maybe start with small tasks to build up their confidence.

Top tip [Click here](#) Passionate and well supported volunteers can be incredible advocates for community programmes. As well as attracting people to initial sessions, volunteers can help support people's ongoing attendance. [Click here](#) **Rachel, Head of Volunteering, Sport England**

How will the volunteers be managed?

- It is important that you make it clear to the volunteer what their role is (think of it like a job description or task for paid staff). [Click here](#) to see the Club Matters resource from Sport England which is full of useful hints and tips.
- National Governing Bodies of Sport are also very experienced at managing volunteers and can provide useful guidance. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has a useful guide on [Click here](#) **managing volunteers** that can be related to all activities, not just cricket.

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT ACTIVITIES IN PLACE?

Go to page 52 in Section 7 – Appendices for a helpful eight point checklist.

Q&A 

WHAT ACTIVITIES APPEAL TO WHICH TYPES OF WOMEN?

Success is less about which activities work for specific groups of women, and more about appealing to women by clearly demonstrating what the experience is like and the benefits of participation.

I Will If You Will (IWIYW) in Bury produced a series of 30-second videos for their website and social media channels that showed people what the sessions would be like. This is a great way to show the fun of attending and break down any myths surrounding the activity. [Click here](#) to watch the videos.

“The videos were a great way of saying ‘it’s not hard, it’s not for the elite, come and see for yourself you’ll be very welcome and will enjoy it.’” Nicola, Partnership & Contracts Coordinator, IWIYW, Bury Council

WHAT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME?

That depends on who you’re trying to reach and what will fit in with their lifestyles.

For example, if you’re trying to attract workers, then lunchtime or pre-work might work best. However, if you’re looking to cater for new mums with kids, then daytime is best. IWIYW in Bury showed that older people prefer morning sessions. What time of day would best suit the lifestyle of the women and girls that you’re looking to attract?

Think about how long the session should be. It doesn’t need to be 45 minutes or an hour. For example, consider running 30-minute lunchtime sessions for workers, so they can take part, change (and shower if they need to), and eat – all within their lunch hour.

Consider what sessions you run at which times. Taking workers again as an example, they’re less likely to want to take part in high-intensity activities that leave them hot and sweaty at lunchtime – they’re much more likely to want to do something lower impact. So run your high-intensity sessions after work instead.

Make sure you check in with participants as you go to assess what’s working and what isn’t. Go to page 31 in Section 5 – Keeping them coming back for more on evaluation.

HOW FAR ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS PREPARED TO TRAVEL?

The more local the sessions the better. Having activities on your doorstep reduces many barriers associated with the time and cost of travel, and increases confidence as people are familiar with their surroundings.

However, IWIYW in Bury demonstrated that people will follow a good instructor, and that the cost and quality of sessions are also important in determining how far people will travel.



Q&A ?

WHAT PRICE IS THE RIGHT PRICE?

The IWIYW programme also showed that pricing needs to take into account your local area, the price of existing activities, and the value of the experience that you're providing.

So take the time to see what's on offer locally and what women and girls are prepared to pay. Make sure you do charge for your activities, but consider offering a free taster session to demonstrate the value of the experience. Think about concessions for certain groups such as students, the unemployed or retired.

WHAT SKILLS SHOULD SESSION LEADERS HAVE?

It generally doesn't matter if men or women are running your sessions, or how old they are – it's all about their people skills and their ability to encourage people to join in and provide a quality experience.

It is also important that they respect any restrictions on women related to their religion/faith.

“ You need people who are understanding, friendly, approachable, empathetic and encouraging. They need to provide a quality experience but they don't necessarily need to have the greatest technical ability. They should have a genuine interest in people not just sport. ” Pritesh, Operations Programme Manager, IWIYW, Bury Council

WHAT IS A GOOD WELCOME?

Making people feel welcome, comfortable and relaxed from the very beginning is vital:

- Make sure reception staff are welcoming and well informed.
- Take time to welcome anyone new.
- Say hello to people and tell them it's nice to see them.
- Tell people what to expect, where to go, what to do and what (if any) equipment to get.
- Reassure them that they can take it at their own pace.
- Invite people to tell you about their needs, but allow for this to be done discreetly.

A great example of this is the LTA's 'Tennis Tuesdays' scheme. Go to page 42 in Section 6 - Learning from others.

If you don't have time to do all of this yourself, then organise in advance for one of your regulars to provide the welcome instead. This has the added benefit of instantly connecting them with other people in the session. Whoever gives the welcome should try not to draw too much attention to the fact that a participant may be new to the venue or the activity.



Q&A 

HOW DO I FIND NEW SUITABLE VENUES?

Very local, accessible venues in the community are more familiar and friendly and therefore present less of a barrier to women and girls.

Experience in IWIYW showed that activities in parks and local venues like community centres and church halls were better attended than activities at leisure centres. You could also use school halls, open spaces or activities close to the school gates to attract parents dropping off children.

Consistency of availability is also really important to ensuring women keep coming back – this is a potential barrier to using very local venues that close, or are used for other purposes at key times of the year.

“ Think about how you can adapt to suit the venues available to you. For example, you could run table tennis in a conference room or another activity in a pub function room where there's loads of availability and hiring costs can be cheap. ”

Pritesh, Operations Programme Manager, IWIYW, Bury Council

HOW DO I MAKE THE SESSIONS SOCIABLE WITHOUT TAKING UP TOO MUCH ACTIVITY TIME?

There are lots of things that you can do without impacting on the session. For example:

- Ask people what they've been up to at the start of the session, or build in a 5-minute break part way through.
- Share something about your day during the warm up.
- Include paired activities as part of the session structure and encourage conversation between women and girls.
- Direct people to the nearest coffee shop/pub after the session.
- Plan informal get-togethers outside of the class, such as social activities to celebrate events in the calendar, or charity events where families are invited.

“ Many women are intimidated by gyms because they think they're full of people who look like the women in adverts. A more relaxed and supportive approach to bringing children along is needed. Facilities and changing rooms must be encouraging and supportive environments, reinforcing positive messages. Women-only sessions with screens help females to feel more comfortable and confident. ”

Jackie, Operational Lead, IWIYW, Bury Council



 NEED MORE HELP? EMAIL US AT IWIYW@SPORTENGLAND.ORG