

WOMEN IN SPORT CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people, Health, Social care and Sport Committee, National Assembly for Wales

8 September 2017

About us

1. We are Women in Sport. Our vision is a society where gender equality exists in every sphere. We're advancing gender equality through and within sport: empowering women and girls through sport and transforming the sport sector.
2. Our response will focus on key issues that relate to women and girls. We are happy for the details of this response to be made public.

Comments

3. Women in Sport welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. A gender gap in participation in physical activity and sport exists throughout the UK. In Wales 52% of boys are active compared with only 44% of girls of primary and secondary school age¹.

¹ Sport Wales (2015) School Sport Survey

4. A gender gap in participation in physical activity emerges between boys and girls at primary school, and extends during secondary school². Many girls and women are missing out on the benefits that being active provides such as improved health, reduced risk of disease, an increase in confidence, improved mental health and higher educational attainment³. We therefore believe it is vital for the National Assembly for Wales to address this inequality.

Barriers

5. Our research, Changing the Game for Girls⁴, found:
 - Boys receive encouragement from their friends to be sporty whereas girls do not.
 - There is a lack of female sporting role models in the media. Women's sport makes up 7% of all sports media coverage in the UK⁵. Women in Sport are currently undertaking research to get a more up to date understanding of this in the UK and Europe.
 - There is also a lack of female role models working and volunteering within the higher levels of sport in Wales. For example, only a third of Chairs in high funded national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport are female and only a quarter of Chief Executives are women in Wales⁶.
 - The least active children are very negative about PE and school sport and feel their experiences of school are putting them off being active.
6. We conducted research with boys and girls aged 7-8 for the Government Equalities Office⁷. We found that gender stereotypes are already emerging about girls about boys abilities to do sport and physical activity. Boys valued sport and achievement, whereas girls were more ambivalent.
7. We work with the Youth Sport Trust on a project to get girls involved in sport and physical activity in England and Northern Ireland called Girls Active. As part of this project we carried out research to understand the attitudes and motivations of both boys and girls. In 2016-17 our research of 26,000 pupils found⁸:
 - Girls perceive there to be more barriers to taking part in PE and school sport than boys – 82% of girls identified at least one barrier compared to only 58% of boys.
 - 24% of girls selected pressure of school work as a barrier and 22% selected not feeling confident.

² Women in Sport and Youth Sport Trust (2015) The Tipping Point: Confidence and attitudes in seven and eight year old girls

³ Women in Sport and Investec (2016) Sport for success

⁴ Women in Sport (2012) Changing the game for girls – policy report

⁵ Women in Sport (2014) Say Yes to Success

⁶ Women in Sport (2017) Beyond 30%

⁷ Women in Sport and Youth Sport Trust (2015) The Tipping Point: Confidence and attitudes in seven and eight year old girls

⁸ Women in Sport and Youth Sport Trust (unpublished) Girls Active survey results, 2016-17

- Girls are less likely to report feeling encouraged to take part in sport, 64% of girls compared with 72% of boys. This drops to only 49% of less active girls who feel encouraged to be active by their parents.
- Girls are motivated to take part in sport and physical activity by having fun and being healthy.
- Girls are much less likely to be motivated by competition than boys (50% of girls compared to 70% of boys).
- Girls are much more likely to be self-conscious. By the time they are 14-16 years old, around one in three (36%) are unhappy with their body image.

Solutions

8. Women in Sport urge the following principles to get girls involved in sport and physical activity.
 - Our research shows that girls should be at the centre of all activity, with co-creation essential⁹.
 - There are pockets of excellent provision of sport in education, this needs to be the norm for girls not the exception. All teachers and coaches need to be trained in how to engage and empower less active girls in sport and physical activity¹⁰.
 - Provision can't stop at the school gates. We need girls to be active both within and outside of school. While getting school provision right is important, we also need to consider what is available for girls outside of school.
 - Influencers are key – families, and in particular parents, play an important role in getting girls active. It is therefore vital that parents understand the value of sport and physical activity for their daughter and encourage her to be active¹¹.

Conclusion

9. Women in Sport are committed to reducing the inequalities for girls and women in sport and we welcome the Committee's interest in this area. We believe there is much work to be done to improve girls participation levels in sport and physical activity and we would welcome further discussion with the Committee and National Assembly about potential solutions to this.

⁹ See Youth Sport Trust booklet 'Engaging less active girls aged 8-10 in physical activity'
www.youthsporttrust.org/girls-active

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Women in Sport (2015) What sways women to play sport?