

HERE GIRLS CAN FESTIVAL

Report
2022

Funded by



BACKGROUND

Here Girls Can was first introduced to Herefordshire secondary schools in 2018, using the platform of the national This Girl Can campaign. Since then, the format of delivery has been adapted in order to engage more schools and young women, and ensure we can make sustainable changes in their physical activity levels. In 2022, we united Here Girls Can with the Herefordshire county-wide School Games programme. Combining both programmes has enabled us to utilise the complementary messaging and resources associated with each programme, alongside working in closer collaboration with local partners. For the first time, Here Girls Can has also extended to include primary schools.

The Herefordshire School Games County Alliance has been fully engaged in the development of the Here Girls Can Festival.

The Festival has been designed using a variety of insight:

- Findings from the Here Girls Can campaign
- Guidance from education and community representatives on the School Games County Alliance
- Focus groups conducted with target age groups; a summary of which can be found within this report



FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were conducted with 4 schools across Herefordshire, each with 6-8 girls per group. Three primary schools (from the city, a market town and rural area) and one secondary school were chosen. It was important to have more insight from primary aged pupils to complement the wealth of insight already gained from secondary schools during previous versions of the Here Girls Can campaign. Girls were asked a number of questions, including their barriers to being active, the types of activities they enjoy or would like to try, the environment they would like to be active in and what their ideal PE lesson would look like. The insight gained provided key principles to follow when designing the festival.



No. 01 — Not being judged

Girls wanted to be active with those similar to them; for most this excluded boys and 'sporty' girls. They didn't want to be with anyone who would make them feel intimidated for not being very good. Girls wanted to take part in individual rather than team activities in order to help avoid this.



No. 02 — Feeling comfortable

It was really important for girls to be comfortable and confident to take part. Most wanted to be able to wear their own clothes, which are baggier and more covering than PE kit.



No. 03 — Choice and mood

Girls wanted to be able to have a choice of different activities that varied in intensity (some calm, some high intensity); some of the more traditional sports were still of interest to primary-aged girls. Girls wanted shorter bursts of activity.



No. 04 — Fun

One of the main motivators for girls to be active, was to have fun. They wanted time to be with their friends, to chat during activities and have music included too. Other reasons for being active were to get stronger, fitter, healthier and more confident.



THE EVENT

A number of careful decisions were made during the planning of the event in order to create the right environment for girls to have a fun, positive experience of being active.

EVENT FEATURE

RATIONALE

Non traditional venue. The event was held in number of activity-specific venues on an industrial estate.

A less intimidating environment for girls, removing the 'sporty' stereotype on immediate arrival.

Activities which focus on personal best, are not competitive and less traditional. Girls participated in functional fitness, yoga, NetFit, skating and dance warm-up.

The activities ranged in intensities, incorporated music, focused on what girls could do individually and were different to usual PE lessons.

Festival vibes; this included lots of bunting, goody bags for all participants and chill out time in the day.

It was important to create a vibrant, fun and social environment - somewhere they would want to be with friends.

Girl Talk Sessions throughout the day, discussing gender stereotypes and topics, such as 'is it ok for girls to sweat?' and 'can I still take part in PE on my period?'

Girls wanted the opportunity to have downtime and chat together, alongside finding out more about health and wellbeing.

Small group sizes. A maximum of 8 girls in years 5-8 from 12 schools.

Smaller numbers to make it less intimidating, whilst encouraging schools to really consider who would most benefit from attending.

Wear what you're comfortable in. Schools were encouraged to allow girls to attend in clothes of their choosing.

Whether PE kit, or own clothes, giving girls the choice to wear what they felt most comfortable in to help with their confidence levels.

14 Year 10 Girls' Champions, playing a buddying role, gathering insight and encouraging lots of chat!

Supports the 'like me' principle - closer to the age group of participants and playing a supportive, rather than coaching role.

OUR FINDINGS

Through informal interviews, we asked teachers why they wanted to bring their students to the Here Girls Can Festival and how they selected them.

Schools liked the way it was offered, such as girls being able to wear their own clothes, experience different kinds of activities that were non-competitive and come in a small group. They identified that there were girls who lacked self-confidence, worried about their body image and were sometimes frightened to take part in things, especially in PE. Some girls would make excuses not to take part and boys could also over power the girls in PE. The event presented an opportunity to help address the issues they were seeing in their students. There would be no pressure on the girls.

- Girls at risk of dropping out of sport / PE
- Girls who struggle with their self-esteem and body image

“ Stays in the toilet for the whole lesson ”

We asked teachers if they'd noticed any differences in their students during the day.

We heard about lots of positive changes within the girls; the most common ones were:

“ A space to be themselves ”

Teachers thought it would be an opportunity to inspire girls and allow them to try different things and perhaps change their attitude to PE.

A range of reasons were used to select the girls who attended, which included:

- Girls lacking self-confidence and wanting to encourage them to join after-school clubs
- Girls who take part in PE, but are shy and perhaps don't usually put themselves forward
- Girls who struggle to self-regulate or have been affected by Covid



Laughing and smiling more



Fully engaged



Talking to each other and opening up



More confident

Schools also shared some specific changes within their students:

Never seen half the girls take their jumpers off before today! Think that's due to self confidence and a lot of the girls are self conscious, worried maybe about what they look like or sweat patches etc. The environment here made them feel ok to take their jumpers off without worry. Enjoyed the fitness which surprised some of them - they were better than they thought!

Aylestone School

One pupil hardly speaks to the staff member she came with, but is more relaxed now and talking.

Ivington Primary School

One girl wouldn't take her coat off in the warm-up, but did - usually doesn't get involved but enjoyed and joined in the NetFit. She wants to show others back at school.

St Thomas Cantilupe Primary School

One of the event team spoke to one girl who was very upset and anxious at the start and didn't want to do the warm-up. She gradually joined in throughout the day and by the time she did functional fitness, she was smiling and completely engaged!

Encouraging sustainable change was an important part of the event. Teachers told us the learning they would take back to school.

- Building resilience; girls fell over skating, but they got back up and carried on! Also, encouraging girls to mix and bond in smaller groups (Cradley)
- Use Hereford Yoga Centre's 10 minute videos on Youtube (Kington)
- Girl talk sessions; the girls, who are usually shy, really opened up with one another and felt safe (Holmer)
- Look at pulling smaller groups in PE lessons. Look at non traditional sports, especially enjoyed fitness (Ivington)
- Girls liked NetFit - the girls are going to do some of the session with their peers at school in PE lessons
- Trying different activities, not just traditional sports. More non-competitive activities - more likely to be involved, some of the more 'sporty' girls can put them off unintentionally (Aylestone)



GIRLS' CHAMPIONS

Fourteen Year 10 girls supported the event as a Girls' Champion. They received training at school before the event, which included discussing Sport England's 'providing positive experiences for young people' recommendations, a number of scenarios and their own barriers to participation. At the event, they led small groups in the girl talk sessions, took part in activities alongside participants and helped to create a welcoming atmosphere.

100%

said they 'definitely' enjoyed being a girls' champion

We asked Girls' Champions what they did to help a participant...

"This girl didn't want to do it at the start but then I encouraged her to do it and did it with her."

"I encouraged a girl to do functional fitness and made her feel normal about her cuts and scars."

“Opened up about my experiences”

...and why they thought their role was so important.

"I felt like the girls found it easier to ask for help and advice with us as we're younger."

"[I] Helped bring people out of their shell and find something they might like."

"Reassuring the girls that everything they are feeling is normal and acceptable."





The skills developed by the Girls' Champions are ones that can be utilised back at their school. All felt that they now wanted to do something back in their own school to continue to make a difference. This ranged from taking on leadership roles and areas of responsibility, to generating ideas, through to "empowering girls" and "encouraging others to be more active".

At the end of the day, we asked what message they would like to share with the girls who participated

Well done!

Keep the same confidence and smile on your faces always :)

You can do anything!

To remember that they should
do what makes them happy

Be yourself

Everyone is able to do sport all the time
and no matter who you are

Well done to everyone and
remember to try new things

*If you don't encourage yourself, no one else's
encouragement will mean anything.
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!*

EVENT FEEDBACK

We received lots of feedback on the day and following the event too. The only comments on how the event could be improved is to ensure all girls could access every session; due to logistics and venue space, not all groups took part in NetFit, skating or 'girl talk'.

"Thank you for today , the girls loved it. Was great to see them have the confidence to have a go, a few are capable and enjoy doing PE but are intimidated by the more confident girls so sit back and won't put themselves forward, hopefully this showed them they are as good."

Stretton Sugwas

"Thanks for allowing us to be such a big part of the festival we all had a ball and the Year 7 and 8s gained so much from it. Well done to you and your team for such a vision and having such a massive impact on so many young girls across the county you really are changing and shaping lives!"

St Mary's RC High School

Aylestone School absolutely loved the day - fitness and skating were the favourites.

According to the Head of PE, the girls felt proud that they'd been selected to go. The 'sportier' girls questioned why they weren't going. It gave the girls a sense of being 'picked'.

"It genuinely was one of the best events I've attended from a school perspective and was organised so well from a gym perspective. I think it had a real impact on all of my girls and I'm sure by looking on their faces, so many of the other school girls too. Just felt compelled to say thank you and that you and everyone involved should be really proud of today, it was a pleasure to be involved in an event that made such a positive impact for the girls. It felt like everyone that attended left with so much positivity about the day, I know my school and Michelle [Bull Functional Fitness] certainly did!"

Holmer Primary School & Bull Functional Fitness

Kingstone High School have used the event as a catalyst to making changes in school: "Thank you so much for the event last Friday – it was fantastic! I now have a group called “Kingstone Girls Can” who are informing what clubs they would like and have given valuable feedback so far. "



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- The Core (Skate Hereford)
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- Hereford Yoga Centre
- Bull Functional Fitness
- The Starlight Company
- St Mary's RC High School (Girls' Champions)

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