



IMPACT REPORT 2024

Supporting girls' physical activity in Herefordshire

Delivered in partnership



STRIDE
ACTIVE



Funded by UKSPF



Overview

Here Girls Can is our localised version of the national This Girl Can campaign. Delivered in partnership between Stride Active and Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire, Here Girls Can aims to inspire and empower girls in school years 5-8 to be physically active. The Here Girls Can festival is a catalyst for creating sustainable behaviour change to girls' physical activity levels. To date we have engaged over 500 unique participants from 47 schools (equivalent to over 40% of schools within Herefordshire) and trained 88 Girls' Champions to support ongoing delivery.

The festival is designed by girls, for girls and follows four design principles that were established by young people ahead of the pilot event in September 2022.

1

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.

2

FEELING COMFORTABLE

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

3

CHOICE & 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.

4

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.

Targeting participants

Here Girls Can is designed for the least active girls who are disengaged with PE/physical activity and at risk of dropping out. Girls may also have low levels of confidence, self-esteem and be affected by body image. We ask schools to identify target participants and their barriers ahead of applying for Here Girls Can. Through the application process, schools highlighted the issues affecting girls' participation in physical activity. Knowing this ahead of the festivals enabled us to address the needs of this target group. These included the negative impact of boys dominating physical activity, lack of opportunities due to rurality, low levels of confidence and self-esteem.

"I have a small number of girls in a school mainly full of boys. This impacts the girls PE as they have to be participating with boys every day for every PE session."

"We have 10 girls in our current Year 5/6 class, all if they could would avoid PE lessons and choose an alternative. They come from a variety of backgrounds including looked after, traveller families and Free School Meals."

"The pupils in question at the early and later stages of Key Stage One are generally very inactive through lack of confidence, body dysmorphia and through a lack of understanding of the local opportunities which there are."

"Taking targeted students out of the classroom environment has shown to improve engagement: we simply don't have the facilities or funding to carry out these sorts of activities without support."

"Our Year 6 girls are demonstrating a worrying level of self-esteem, beyond the typical level we usually see in Year 6. This is manifesting itself as:

- refusing to participate in sport
- reluctance in extended writing tasks
- friendship issues due to difficulty accepting friendships and compliments
- behaviour issues due to low self-esteem

Last year, when our current Year 6s were Year 5, it was a constant battle to demonstrate to them how incredible they are as individuals, we were consistently faced with the girls comparing each other and not seeing themselves as enough."

"We are a small rural village school, with a small number of girls in a very boy heavy setting. Being in a rural area with poor transport links, children often don't get the opportunities to try out alternative sports."

"Some of our girls need to be able to access physical activity without boys watching and commenting on their participation. Being in a girls only environment will [...]inspire their confidence to be themselves and contribute to a wider sense of well being – that they can model to younger girls in our school. This will help to develop confident, independent, young women in our community."

Developing insight

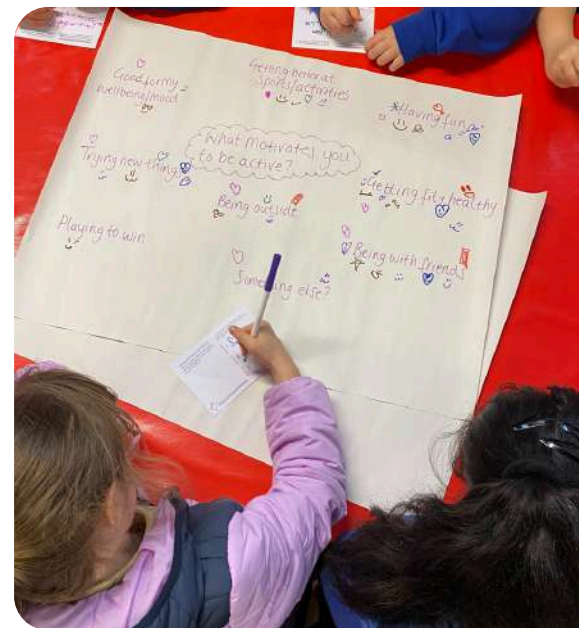
Girl Talk sessions are an important part of the Here Girls Can festivals. They provide a safe space, supported by event staff and Girls Champions, for participants to ask questions, share motivations, barriers and experiences. It also provides an opportunity to gain important insight and pupil voice to inform future Here Girl Can experiences. We provided participants with a list of possible motivations and barriers, aligning to those in the Girls Active Survey (Youth Sport Trust). Girls were also encouraged to share other responses beyond these.

MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

(Ranked highest to lowest)

1. Being with friends
2. Having fun
3. Being fit and healthy
4. Being outside
5. Trying something new
6. For my mood and wellbeing
7. Playing to win
8. Getting better at a sport/activity

This insight continues to align with the design principles outlined on page 2, demonstrating that fun and friendship in a non-competitive environment remains important for this target audience.



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

(Ranked highest to lowest)

1. Boys and not feeling good at it
2. Getting changed in front of others
3. Not feeling confident
4. Being watched/judged
5. What I have to wear
6. My period and being outside
7. Worried about how I look

Other responses from participants include:

“Not having any friends that do it”

“Underestimated”

“What we see on social media”

“Rushed”

“Sometimes the PE teacher makes me feel like they like boys better than girls”

The findings from this reinforce how Here Girls Can festivals create the right circumstances to remove barriers to physical activity. A female-only environment, focused on individual activities that encourage participants to think about their own personal achievements will remain integral to the design principles.

Developing insight

During Girl Talk sessions, we encouraged pupil voice by giving participants postcards to complete. Teachers were able to take these back to school to help inform changes that could increase girls' participation.

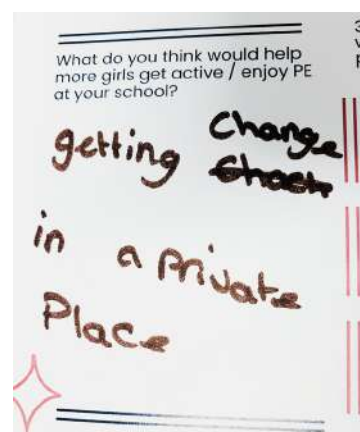
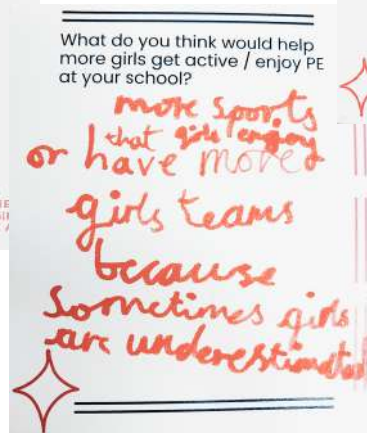
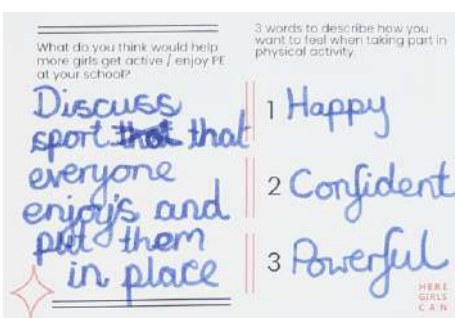
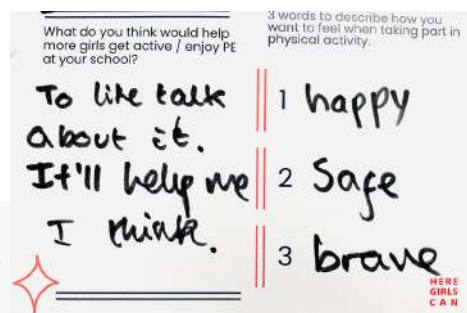
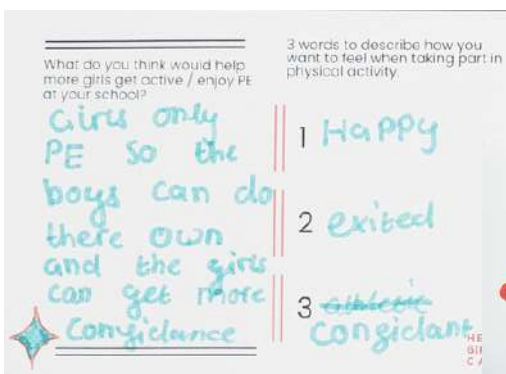
Happy, confident and excited

were the three most popular feelings that girls want to experience when taking part in PE. Other feelings include:

**safe, calm,
comfortable,
strong, supported,
energised, proud,
included and joyful.**



When asked what might help other girls enjoy PE more, one strong theme emerged. Having opportunities to be active as a girls-only group, without judgement from boys was continually mentioned. This aligns with the barriers identified on page 4. Other thoughts included having more open discussions and choices, alongside not having to change into PE kit in front of others.



Outcomes

This year we introduced participant feedback to capture immediate thoughts and feelings towards the festival.

85%
**Improved
confidence**

We asked participants to rate their confidence at the start and end of the event, using a scale of 1 to 10. 56% of participants expressed a notable increase in their confidence of at least 3 points. This is significant given confidence was the third biggest barrier for girls (see page 4).

"Being here has boosted my confidence and encouraged me to try new things"

We asked participants if the festival had inspired them to take part in more physical activity.

"I enjoyed it because I tried new things"

"It was one of the best days of my life"

We invited participants to share their feelings throughout the day and provide their feedback.

95%
**Felt
inspired**

"I felt like I was meant to be here"

"Free to express myself"

"When I came I was excited/nervous and I didn't feel calm, like I was trapped in a bubble. Everyone popped it and I am happy again."

"It was quite life changing for me to have a chance to stay out of my home/school. I feel safe."



Outcomes

Alongside gaining participant feedback, we also sought the views of school staff to identify if they noticed any changes in behaviour during the event.

“Yes – 100% massive differences.

The girls are more chatty, confident, excited about doing things.”

To ensure girls felt they had choice on the day (one of our design principles), one teacher told us how she gave participants the option to opt out if they wanted. However, all tried everything; this was especially noticeable in one participant who the teacher thought would have taken that opportunity, but she willingly participated in everything.

“The girls who are usually a lot more timid and quieter are showing a lot more confidence. They are happy to share ideas and give everything a go. They are joining in more happily than they normally would and all of the girls have commented on how they haven't felt judged at all and that they have had a lot of fun. A couple of the girls were really reluctant to come, but they have said they are so glad that they changed their minds as they've loved this day.”



Teachers also shared how the festival has helped them to develop new knowledge, either of activities or their students.

“Much more willing to talk freely. Learnt more about some [students] today than in the last year.”

“I haven't taught the group of girls who attended and so this allowed me to build a relationship with these individuals. Now when we see each other around school we have that connection to say hello and stop to have a chat about school life and physical activity.”

Outcomes

We also asked school staff what they would do differently as a result of attending the festival.

"Add yoga and fitness into our class/school (girls request)

Focus more on mental health/chatting things through/self care etc. We are going to create a 'girls club' after school club – yoga, self care etc"

Luston Primary School

"Implement 'Girl talk' sessions with upper KS2 teachers and ELSA"

Sutton Primary School

"PHSE lessons – SRE – sharing bra products with the girls. Have never done this (only sanitary products) and thought this was a great idea."

Clehonger Primary School

"Understanding 'why' students have different views around physical activity/sport i.e increase the amount of student voice."

Wigmore High School

"I really like the 'safe space' posters and will look to build on these within the department."

Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

The responses from schools align with the barriers and ideas that girls voiced during the Girl Talk sessions (choice, separate opportunities to boys). This demonstrates how the festival facilitates an environment whereby girls can talk openly and teachers can gain valuable insight to inform future changes in their school.

"Give girls a voice in their PE lessons."

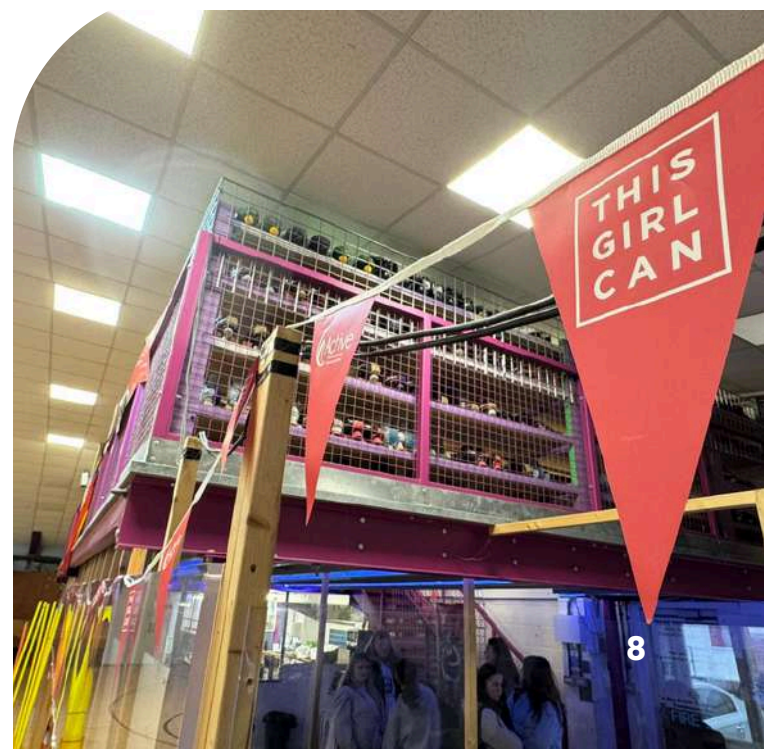
Lord Scudamore Academy

"Incorporate more girl only activity and give it great prominence."

St James Primary School

"Our girls are keen to have some separate sessions for PE so this could be something to incorporate at times amongst the older year groups."

Ledbury Primary School



Sustained impact

For the first time, three of this year's Girls' Champions were original participants in the September 2022 pilot festival. Now in year 10, the girls were able to share their own experiences with new participants and talk about the difference attending Here Girls Can made to them.

"When I was in year 8, I came to Here Girls Can. I felt alone when with my school but the girls champions really brought me out of my shell and made me feel safe and comfortable. After the experience I became more confident in sport and took up many new activities. The experience was good and I'm even more glad that I could come back and be a girl champion and that I could offer the same support along with making the children feel comfortable and free to do what they want." Year 10 student, St Mary's RC High School

"Being back as a girls champion made me improve. Last time I was here (year 8) it improved my confidence and being back as a girls champion improved my self confidence as I was an inspiration this time." Year 10 student, JKHS

"Last time I was here it improved my confidence making me feel as if I can do more without judgement." Year 10 student, JKHS



Sustained impact

Teachers have noted the sustained impact Here Girls Can has had on participants they brought. This case study, provided by John Kyrle High School, highlights the story of one student who attended the first Here Girls Can festival.

"Throughout her school career she has been reluctant to take part in PE due to her size, often bringing notes to excuse participation and generally not wanting to take part. I invited her to attend the 'TGC' day event, this has given her more confidence and showed her that 'she can do PE'. Year Ten students get the opportunity to volunteer to help Mrs Butler run Primary School Sports Events and E has always wanted to be part of this. She was exceptional at the recent KS1 Multiskills event and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. Since attending TGC, E takes part in all her PE lessons, only has a note to excuse in the most genuine of circumstances and is such a confident young lady, unrecognisable to the student who she was in Year Eight [when she first attended Here Girls Can]. We often have a conversation about this and she glows with pride to know how far she has come."



Sustained impact

Further examples of long-term behaviour change in girls have been shared by schools, from increased confidence to joining extra-curricular clubs for the first time. Some schools have also made whole school changes that have been influenced by their attendance at Here Girls Can and feedback from their students..

“After bringing a team of girls last year to the Here Girls Can Festival, we noticed that the pupils became more confident in the classroom and were more willing to challenge themselves. The children who took part in the festival were our less active pupils and they would often stand on the periphery during PE lessons. Following the festival, the children were more engaged during physical activity and we had one child who took part in sports day for the first time.”

Gorsley Goffs Primary School

“Since attending we have looked at how we can introduce more sport for girls at school, and we have had girls only football one lunchtime, and a girl’s sport club [...] Our school council will have the topic of girls sport as a regular agenda item to discuss and think of new ideas annually.”

Peterchurch Primary School

“It significantly boosted their engagement in sport, increased their confidence in lessons, and encouraged them to participate in extracurricular activities. The festival also raised their awareness of wider health and helped prepare them for secondary school.”

Trinity Primary School



We have attended previous events with similar groups of girls and found on our return to school they are enthusiastic and keen to take on new challenges with confidence. It has also opened our eyes to the barriers that girls face, in particular we saw the enthusiasm for martial arts and ran a club in school, in which girls were encouraged to come in clothes they felt comfortable in, this was a huge success.

Withington Primary School

Sustained impact

"Previous pupils have commented highly on their experiences of Here Girls Can and it has dramatically improved the involvement of girls within the school not just in P.E. but in after-school clubs too. So much so that we, last term, had enough interest despite being a small school, to run a girls only football club."

Ivington Primary School

"We have previously attended the festival and all the girls who have come along loved everything about the day. It gave them a new passion for being active and allowed them to realise there are other ways to do this other than the obvious sports. Some girls have gone on to join clubs after attending the festival because they enjoyed activities so much. They felt comfortable throughout the day and did not feel any judgement."

Ledbury Primary School

"Some of the girls are reluctant to take part in sport and by being able to thrive at the Here girls can festival, they returned to school happy and ready to engage. A few of the children who have attended this festival has even carried on with sports and joined some of the extra-curricular clubs that we offer."

Leominster Primary School

"The children who attended last year came back absolutely buzzing and were so excited to tell me all about it - some even joined a dance club as a result. They also gained the confidence to become playground leaders."

St Francis Xavier Primary School

"We have also begun to discuss more in PSHE the effects physical activity can have on our ever changing bodies as women."

St James Primary School

"The pupils I brought along visibly grew in confidence and stature throughout the day and this was then brought forward into their PE lessons. They were more engaged and their participation levels in PE increased massively. Some even became confident enough to take part in inter school competitions, such as Netball."

Steiner Academy Hereford



Future intentions

Now we have evidence of long-term, sustained impact and behaviour change, it is even more imperative that we continue to deliver and develop Here Girls Can in Herefordshire. Here Girls Can envisions a future where every girl feels empowered to participate in physical activity. Our mission to inspire confidence and create inclusive opportunities for young girls is only possible through the support of our community. As we strive to expand our reach, further develop this programme and amplify our impact, we invite you to join us in shaping a brighter future for girls' participation in physical activity.

Your support will enable us to provide resources, train more Girls' Champions and deliver more experiences that may alter girls' lifelong attitudes towards physical activity. Together, we can foster a positive movement in Herefordshire.

Engage with us today—be part of the change!





THANK YOU

For taking the time to
read this report.

If you would like to find out more or
support Here Girls Can in the future,
please get in touch.

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