

Delivered in partnership



HERE GIRLS CAN

Supporting girls' physical activity in Herefordshire

Funded by



Overview

Here Girls Can is our localised version of the national This Girl Can campaign. Delivered in partnership between Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire and Stride Active, Here Girls Can aims to inspire and empower girls to be physically active.

The Here Girls Can schools' festival is a catalyst for creating sustainable behaviour change to girls' physical activity levels. To date we have engaged almost 350 unique participants from 26 schools across the county.

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 March 2022.



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.



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.



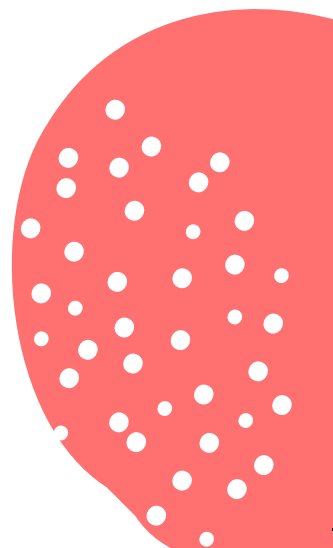
Choice and mood

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.



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.



Testing our insight

We have continued to use Girl Talk sessions at the festival to break up physical activity and also provide a safe space for girls to talk, ask questions and dispel myths. This equally provides us with an opportunity to test our insight, check and challenge our design principles and find out changes in girls' motivations and barriers to being active.

Participants were given postcards to write their own personal responses, anonymously. These were then given to teachers to take back to school and consider if they could be actioned. The postcards asked:

What do you think would help more girls get active / enjoy PE at your school?

Write 3 words to describe how you want to feel when taking part in physical activity.

Happy	20
Comfortable	15
Energised / energetic	10
Proud	8
Confident	5
Having fun	5



What 3 words

In addition to the top words listed, girls also shared these desired feelings:

Calm Joyful Warm
Inspired Excited
Normal Safe Supported
Not being judged **Sporty**
Amazing Free **Motivated**

What do you think would help more girls get active / enjoy PE at your school?

"I think maybe letting us pick the teams so you can be more comfortable with your team."

The feedback received from girls can be assigned to four themes; the environment, clothing, activities, and feelings.

Comments around the environment include both the physical and social environment within PE. Having music during PE lessons, which is appropriately chosen by students was one of the most popular responses. This was closely followed by who features in the PE environment. Several comments identify the desire for girls-only groups, being with friends, choosing your own partner/team and "split groups for people who enjoy and don't". Feedback on the physical environment centred on wanting to be warm by having "more indoor sports" and "not going outside in the winter".

Clothing and changing were identified as barriers to being physically active in school. Some girls stated a preference to "wear our own clothes that makes us feel comfortable". We know that this is not feasible, but some concerns around PE kit have the potential to be addressed.

"No musty bibs."

Some girls find PE kit uncomfortable, particularly requesting "longer skorts" or "not having to wear a skort in PE over leggings." Changing in front of peers was frequently mentioned. "Going into school in your PE kit", or "cubicles in the changing rooms" were some of the recommendations made by participants.

"Taking input from students on what sport."

A broad range of activity suggestions were listed by girls, from specific sports through to how activities should be chosen or set up. Specific sports such as tag rugby, football, Bollywood dance, gymnastics and meditation were requested by participants.

"More single activities (no pairs)."



Opportunities to try something new, having more choice of activities, or a greater variety were popular comments. Several girls also requested "less rough games" or "less contact sport."

Whilst a lot of the comments on environment, clothing and activities evoke particular feelings, girls did also provide very specific feedback about how they did, or did not want to feel during PE. Feeling included and not being judged were cited on several instances.

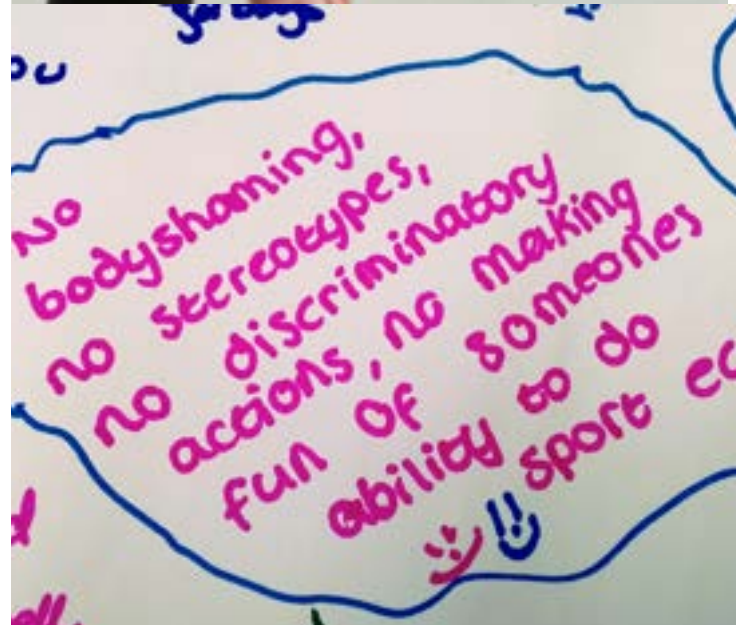
"Not being left out."

There were only two comments linked to periods, but both of which said that girls should not have to do PE when on their period. This indicates that we still need to educate girls about how exercise can feel attainable whilst menstruating.

Design principles

During the Girl Talk sessions, we asked girls to reconsider the four design principles formerly identified through consultation with their peers: not being judged, fun, feeling comfortable and mood/choice.

They were asked to order them according to importance, but also identify if anything is missing. Feeling comfortable and not judged scored highly. This is also reflected by many of the comments that girls shared on their postcards. However, feeling comfortable now stems beyond clothing choices and instead is more encompassing.



"No judgement – girls should support each other, we need to make sure everyone feels comfortable, we need to make people be happy and feel safe wherever they are."

This process has reinforced the design principles of the Here Girls Can festivals. It has also highlighted other factors that are important to girls which could be incorporated in the future:

- Set a task/achievement to aim for
- Complimenting and growing confidence
- Getting fit
- Feeling inspired and proud

Girls also identified "someone to help me through the way" as being important. One participant credited Ruby, a Girls' Champion as being important in helping to build her confidence. These comments support the integral role that Girls' Champions have in creating a safe and supportive environment.

Girls' Champions

Feedback from Girls' Champions aligns with this. When asked why they thought their role was important, responses centred on them being role models, helping to build

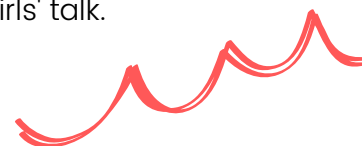
confidence, making participants feel comfortable and to provide support.

"To be a role model and show the girls they CAN do it."

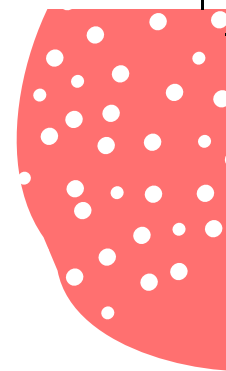
"To guide the girls and make them feel comfortable."

Girls' Champions did this in a number of ways. "I stood with one of the girls until she wanted to do the activity". Others became a partner for participants, providing one-to-one support and encouragement.

Not only do Girls' Champions make an impact on the day, they also support culture change and sustainability back in their school. All identified an action they wanted to do back in school, such as supporting year 7 girls, leading younger girls, "share what we learnt" and even set up their own girls' talk.



What's changed?



THEME

IMPACT

This Girl Can Legacy Clubs

Following the festival, a number of schools such as Kingstone and BHBS have introduced extra-curricular HGC **Legacy clubs**, based on the principles of the festival: girls-only, focus on fun, activity to music, informal approach.

Accessing Alternative Activities

A number of schools have accepted offers of subsidised activity from providers, either at a community setting or at school. Schools have also reported that participants have attended activities with local community providers outside of school too.

Further Support/Resources

BHBS submitted an **application to 'Opening School Facilities'** to support them to make changes to girls' extra-curricular activity. They have purchased equipment to replicate 'expressive' activities for female students, as a result of attending the festival.

Embedding HGC Principles

Many schools have embedded learning from the day to make small but effective changes to the way PE, extra-curricular and physical activity is delivered: smaller group sizes, replicating activities experienced on the day, mixing different groups.

Changes have also been made to PE kit, such as a sports bra now included on the kit list. Schools have also **spent more time talking to girls** and finding out what they would like; Withington Primary have started a girls-only football extra-curricular club after doing this. Kington Primary are planning on delivering their own Girl Talk sessions.

Teachers

The festival has not only impacted pupils. Teachers have reported feeling **more confident** in discussing barriers such as the menstrual cycle; they have reconsidered what is offered to girls in school and **feel more inspired** to make a difference in this area.

Case study – Kingstone High School



Kingstone High School have fully embedded the ethos and learning from the previous two festivals into their school. Their case study demonstrates that, whilst the festival is a one-off event for participants, sustained behaviour change has occurred as a result.

"Over the last two years, with support and guidance from the Here Girls Can Festival, we now have an invite-only club for the previous attendees from the festival. The 12–16 girls come to a lunch time club run by the Year 11s who were Girls Ambassadors on the day from our high school. The KS3 girls invited feel part of a little community and seeing them communicate with one another in a happy environment whilst being physically active is very special.

Some girls from my previous cohort who attended the festival now participate whilst on their periods, with rest breaks, water and at a low intensity. Sometimes they need a little encouragement and reminding about what the festival taught them about how exercise is beneficial when you are on your period. They are much more open to discussing their problems with me whereas before it was seen as a bit of a taboo. I too, have learnt about adaptive exercise whilst girls are on their periods and wish to continue this knowledge for the future cohorts.

Each year, the students ask if it is running again and if they can go back to it, showing how inspiring and successful it was. We now have a This Girl Can board in our PE Department with pictures from the past two events which is a great talking point for others, as well as increasing the girls football participation too with the recent successful Euros event. One of our students has written a statement which is laminated on our girls board, about the event which I would like to share with you below, directly quoted from our current Year 9 who attended as a Year 8:

“Where do I start? I am so grateful to be chosen to take part in This Girl Can. It was an amazing experience. I cannot describe how comforting it was to be with a group of girls that understand you and how you feel. It is an experience I will never forget! From the yoga, to the rollerblading, and even the girl chit chat. Ever since participating, I have felt more included and confident with different age groups and myself. It made me realise that I am not on my own! "I am hot and not bothered".

This student has chosen to take a sports leaders course in Year 9 and also assists with the Year 7s at football club on a weekly basis. This has broadened her previously limited social circle and has expanded her activity levels in sports and PE."