

# Girlguiding – Written evidence (NPS0074)

## 1. Overview

- 1.1. As the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, with almost 400,000 young members, and over 100,000 volunteers, our submission is focused on the barriers that stop girls from participating in sport and other physical activity, and our recommendations for encouraging girls and young women to lead more active lifestyles.
- 1.2. Girlguiding believes it is important to promote and support girls' and young women's access to sport and physical activity as it provides them with a range of benefits, from having fun to improving their health, wellbeing and confidence. We also want to highlight the importance of children and young people learning to be active through play, adventure and other opportunities in their local communities.
- 1.3. Whilst many girls show an interest in sport when they are young, they are more likely to drop sport and have lower activity levels than boys in their teenage years. We would like to see a national plan for sport and recreation consider the experiences and needs of girls and young women equally to those of boys and young men. From what girls have told us, their priorities for action to increase equality in sport and recreation are:
  - Barriers that stop girls and young women participating should be addressed.
  - Girls and boys should have equal choices in sport and physical activity in and out of school.
  - Women's professional sport should have the same representation, funding and support as men's.
  - There should be a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment so that girls feel safer to be active
  - Adventure should be much for girls and women as it is for boys and men.

## 2. Relevant evidence

- 2.1. The [Girls' Attitudes Survey](#) is Girlguiding's annual research project into the lives of girls and young women, aiming to build a comprehensive picture of the emerging needs, issues and priorities of girls and young women today. The survey provides a snapshot of the views of over 2,000 girls and young women from across the UK aged 7 to 21, within and outside Girlguiding. Since 2009, we have covered a range of issues affecting girls from education, wellbeing, aspirations, sport to safety on- and off-line.

## 3. Our response

- 3.1. **How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle?**
  - 3.1.1. We encourage expert partners to work with charities such as Girlguiding, as we are able to deliver fun activities to almost 400,000 girls across the country, enabling more girls to become active.

- 3.1.2. Going outside to play and have fun can enable children to be physically active so it is important that the creation and development of local play facilities take into consideration the needs of girls and young women and that equality impact assessments should be used when assessing proposals. Our 2020 Girls' Attitudes Survey shows that the majority (82%) of girls and young women aged 7-21 think that children and young people should be more involved in designing playgrounds, parks and outdoor facilities in their local area.
- 3.1.3. Our yet to be published data on play and sport shows that less than half of children aged 6-18 are a 10 minutes' walk away from a football pitch (43%) or a playground (42%). Just over a quarter have a leisure centre (28%) and a basketball court (26%) close by. Under a fifth have an outdoor gym (19%) or an adventure playground (18%) 10 minutes' walk away. 1 in 10 children do not have any of these outdoor spaces within 10 minutes of their home. Our focus groups revealed that some teenage girls think outdoor spaces are aligned to boys interests more (e.g. football pitches or basketball courts) and so were less likely to use public spaces and instead meet friends in cafes or went shopping.
- 3.1.4. Therefore, we believe children's voices should be part of planning policy and this should include a diversity of children who live in that local area. Local authorities should ensure that whatever is delivered locally, must take into consideration the needs of girls as well as boys.

*'It's wrong but sport still seems to be encouraged more for boys than girls, sometimes there are no girls at my park. Only boys' (Girl, 12)*

3.2. **How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.**

- 3.2.1. In our 2020 Girls' Attitudes Survey girls told us their choices in sport and PE at school decrease relative to boys as they get older, from nine in ten (91%) aged 7 to 10 saying they have the same choices as boys, to 51% aged 11 to 16, and less than half (40%) aged 17 to 21. Their enjoyment of physical activity, sport and PE follows the same pattern, with 88% aged 7 to 10 saying they enjoy it down to 59% of 11 to 16-year-olds, and 46% aged 17 to 21. Our 2017 research also shows that girls aged 11-21 are not offered the same choices of sport at school as boys are, and this may be discouraging girls from being able to lead an active lifestyle, especially if the sports they are offered do not meet their interests.
- 57% of girls are not offered martial arts at school, but 31% want it offered to them
  - 37% of girls are not offered swimming at school, but 33% want it offered to them

- 21% of girls are not offered gymnastics at school, but 25% want it offered to them
- 39% of girls say only boys are offered rugby at school, but 22% want it offered to them
- 27% of girls say only boys are offered football at school, but 22% want it offered to them
- 23% of girls say only boys are offered basketball at school, but 20% want it offered to them

*'In PE my male teacher gets the boys to do most of the setting up and treats us like we need the boys to show us how to do everything when we are capable' (Girl, 11-16, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2017)*

3.2.2. We believe all girls and young women should be able to access sport and physical activity outside of school that is easily accessible and fun. This could be in their local park or leisure centres. Activities and programmes for young people should give girls and boys equal opportunities to try and take part in activities and not reinforce gender stereotypes. Our 2019 research shows that some girls do not have access to the following local facilities:

- A park (30% aged 7-10; 20% aged 11-21)
- Leisure centre (49% aged 11-21)
- Playground (47% aged 7-10)
- Outdoor facility centre that feels safe to use (62% aged 11-21)

3.3. **How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.**

3.3.1. It should be noted that gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic status must be considered within the younger age groups and not just adults, because it's important that all children and young people have access to opportunities to try different forms of activities which can help them to continue to be active throughout their life. As the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, our answer to this question is focused on what stops girls and young women having an active lifestyle. Our research shows that there are several barriers, and we believe it is important these are tackled, and that girls and young women are supported and encouraged to access opportunities to be involved in sport and physical activity. Our research with girls during lockdown '[Early findings on the impact of Covid-19 on girls and young women](#)' shows that 41% of girls and young women aged 11-18 are doing less physical activity than they were before lockdown and this is a concern.

3.3.2. Gender stereotypes

- 57% of girls aged 7-10 and 44% aged 11-21 say gender stereotypes changes what sport and exercise they do (2017 survey)

- A quarter of girls throughout school see PE as more for boys (27% aged 7-10; 26% 11-21) (2017 survey)
- 48% of girls aged 11-21 say gender stereotypes and encouraging girls and boys to play with certain types of toys and games makes it harder for girls and boys to be themselves
- 42% of girls aged 7-10 think boys are better than girls at being strong, and 31% think that boys are better at taking risks and not worrying about failing (2017 survey)
- When asked what feels unfair as a girl, girls aged 7-10 said that people think they can't be strong, that they can't play certain sports, and that girls are described as girly and not adventurous (2018 survey)

*'I think girls' lives would be better if girls felt more encouraged to do sports in school' (Girl, 11-16, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2018)*

### 3.3.3. Appearance pressures

- 43% of girls aged 11-21 say fear of judgement about their appearance stops them from doing sport and exercise (2017 survey)
- Two in five (42%) aged 11 to 21 feel pressured to be physically active because what they see on social media makes them want to change how they look. This is higher for girls who have a disability, and girls who identify as LGBTQ. (2020 survey)
- Our research with girls during lockdown ['Early findings on the impact of Covid-19 on girls and young women'](#) revealed that girls and young women aged 15-18 have felt more under pressure during the pandemic to look a certain way on social media, for example to lose weight to exercise (26%).

*'Not being happy with how I look means I don't like to play sports' (Girl, 7-10, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2018)*

### 3.3.4. Personal safety and harassment

- 34% of girls aged 7-21 feel worried to do things outside on their own (2020 survey)
- 26% of girls aged 7-10, 41% aged 11-16 and 49% aged 17-21 feel unsafe when they go outside (2020 survey)
- 24% of girls aged 11-21 say harassment and intimidated by boys and men stops them from doing sport and exercise (2017 survey)
- 23% of girls aged 7-10 and 27% aged 11-21 don't feel safe enough to go outdoors to play and have fun (2019 survey)
- Over 1 in 10 (12%) aged 11-21 say sexual harassment and catcalling stops them from going outdoors to play and have fun (2019 survey)
- Almost one in 10 girls aged 7-10, 22% aged 11-16 and 41% aged 17-21 are often stared at and receive unwanted attention when they're outside (2020 survey)

*'I would go outdoors more in my local area if there was less cat calling' (Young Woman, 17-21, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2019)*

### 3.3.5. Lack of women's sport representation

- 86% girls and young women aged 7-21 think women in sport are good role models for girls (2020 survey)
- 83% of girls aged 7-21 think there should be an equal amount of men and women's sport shown on TV (2019 survey)
- 81% of girls aged 7-21 think seeing more women's sport on TV would encourage girls and women to do more sport (2019 survey)
- 72% of girls and young women aged 11-21 think the lack of media coverage of women's sport leads girls and women to being treated less fairly than men (2018 survey)
- 70% say seeing women in sport use their bodies powerfully makes them feel inspired (2020 survey)
- 55% of girls aged 7-21 agreed that seeing the Olympics/Paralympics on TV inspired them to do more sport (2016 survey)
- 56% of girls think having less women's sport on TV than men's sport sends a message to girls and women that sport is mostly for boys and men (2019 survey)
- A third (32%) of girls aged 7-21 are turned off sport by the way the media shows women athletes, including how they look instead of their talents. Girls who identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic, girls with disabilities and girls who are LGBQ are more likely to think this (2020 survey)
- 17% of girls aged 7-10 and 9% aged 11-21 say too much traffic stops them from playing and having fun outdoors (2019 survey)

*'Women's sport should be more supported.'* (Girl, 13-16, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2020)

### 3.3.6. Other barriers

- 39% of girls aged 11-21 say not feeling good enough at sport and exercise stops them from taking part (2017 survey)
- 17% of girls aged 11-21 think sport is too competitive (2017 survey)
- 42% aged 11-21 say having their period stops them from doing the things they enjoy, including sport (2018 survey)
- 15% of girls aged 7-10 and 35% aged 11-21 say that having nothing to do in their local area stops them from playing and going outdoors (2019 survey)
- 14% aged 7-21 say their local area isn't clean and this stops them from going outdoors to play and have fun (2019 survey)
- 18% of girls aged 7-10 and 10% aged 11-21 say they're not allowed outdoors which stops them from playing and having fun (2019 survey)

*'I would go outdoors more in my local area if there was a safer way to cross the road'* (Girl, 7-10, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2019)

### 3.3.7. Our success stories include:

- **Our Ambassador Anna McNuff** - Inspirational adventurer and former GB rower and European medallist, Anna McNuff, was appointed as an ambassador for Girlguiding in 2018. Anna is a great

role model for girls and young women across the UK, showing them that adventure is as much for girls as it is for boys.

- **She Rallies** – a partnership with Judy Murray to build girls' interest in Tennis through young leaders delivering sessions to create positive role models and help girls to develop skills through play.
- **Sport England project to reach girls in areas of deprivation** – sport packs and equipment to units in areas of deprivation to help girls be active with accessible resources. Over 300 kits have been ordered so far.
- **GO Outdoors** - Together we provide members, volunteers, girls and their parents with exciting activity ideas and a discount on all the kit they will need to have an outdoor adventure
- **Consultations with girls themselves** – We actively consult with the girls in our membership to develop fun and engaging activities for girls. Girls told us that they want to be active, but they would prefer to take aspects of sport and make it into a game so that it is more fun and less competitive. By creating an environment that centres around a safe space with friends, there is less pressure for girls to do well and so they're more likely to try new things, and build on other skills such as creativity, teamwork, leadership and strategic thinking. As part of this consultation, we were able to develop a wide range of activities that are accessible to girls. These include:
  - Get sporty unit meeting activities
  - Agility badge for Rainbows
  - Dancing badge for Brownies
  - Fitness badge for Guides
  - Sports badge for Rangers

### 3.4. **Should there be a national plan for sport and recreation? Why/why not?**

- 3.4.1. In 2019, we were involved in developing the schools sport action plan to ensure equal choices in sport for girls and boys was included. We would like to see this more effectively implemented. We believe a national plan for sport and recreation should consider the experiences and needs of girls and young women equally to those of boys and young men.

## 4. **Our recommendations**

- 4.1. **Address the barriers.** Girlguiding supports initiatives to reduce barriers to sport and physical activity, including tackling gender stereotypes that affect children from a young age and impact their views of themselves and what they can do, pressures of body confidence, fear and experience of sexual harassment, gender bias in access to opportunities and lack of visibility of women in sport.
- 4.2. **Provide equal access.** Girlguiding wants all girls to have equal access to sport and physical activity that interests them and meets their needs. Schools should listen to girls to understand what sport and physical activity they would like to do. All schools should ensure that girls are given the same choices in sport at school as boys. We

want schools to recognise that there are sports which girls have traditionally not been involved in, and they should actively promote these to girls and young women (e.g. football, basketball). Activities and programmes outside of school should also be promoted equally to girls and boys and not reinforce gender stereotypes. The creation and development of local play facilities should take into consideration the needs of girls and young women and equality impact assessments should be used when assessing proposals.

- 4.3. **Fund and promote women's professional sport.** Girls tell us they feel there are not enough women role models in sport for them to look up to. We believe the lack of funding for professional women's sport compared to men's means that women sporting role models are not visible enough to girls. We want to see media outlets take responsibility for covering women's sport more widely and respectfully and promoting women journalists. We believe women's sports should be just as visible and just as celebrated as men's. More women as visible leaders across the sporting sector would help to change this.
- 4.4. **A zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.** We support girls' calls to tackle the barriers they face to doing sport and physical activity including sexual harassment. This includes schools and other youth sport provision taking a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, through all adults working with young people in sport knowing how to challenge this behaviour and take seriously reports of sexual harassment; high quality Relationships and Sex Education to educate all children and young people about respectful, healthy relationships; and through more choice for girls to do sport and physical activity in girl/women-only spaces such as gyms or swimming sessions.
- 4.5. **More women adventurer role models.** Currently adventure is heavily gendered with many more men being represented as adventurers than women in TV, film and in print and this sends a negative message to girls and young women about their opportunities in the world. Girlguiding believes that media and content producers should balance the number of adventure shows and features that profile women and men.

## 5. About us

- 5.1. Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, with almost 500,000 members. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good. We give them a space to have fun. We run *Rainbows* (4–7 years), *Brownies* (7–10 years), *Guides* (10–14 years) and *Rangers* (14–18 years). Registered Charity No. 306016.
- 5.2. The Girlguiding [programme](#) gives girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, gain valuable skills, discover their full potential and have fun. We give girls the opportunity to be active through:
  - Our activity centres – from archery, abseiling and geocaching
  - Festivals

- Camping
  - Events
- 5.3. In March 2020 we launched [Adventures At Home](#), a range of activities online to help children, parents and carers find simple ways to create fun, adventure and boost wellbeing during the current crisis. Activities for Rainbows and Brownies include an adventure map challenge to explore their local area (or at home).
- 5.4. [Future Girl](#) is our five-year plan to help our girls and volunteers make the changes they want to see in the world. In 2018, over 76,000 girls and 16,000 leaders told us what topics they cared about. Through the Future Girl topics, our members of all ages will explore and act together on the things they really care about. As part of our [Adventurers topic](#), we are campaigning for fun and adventure of all kinds to every girl.

*29 January 2021*