

Written submission from Sport England (SPP0107)

Executive summary

- Sport England welcomes the Women and Equalities Committee inquiries into Sexual Harassment of Women and Girls in Public Places and Harassment in the Workplace. This submission seeks to provide evidence which is hoped will be of interest and relevance to both inquiries.
- Women and girls should absolutely have the right to feel safe, secure and comfortable in public places, free from harassment. For many women and girls, taking part in sport or physical activity is done within a public space; whether that's in a community hall, leisure centre, running, walking or cycling in public or taking part in exercise or activity in another public sphere.
- Paid staff and volunteers have the right to work in an environment free from harassment, threatening or inappropriate behaviour and Sport England strongly believes that good governance and organisational culture at all levels of grassroots sport play a vital role in safeguarding people in the workplace.
- An insight-led approach is at the heart of Sport England's most recent strategy, published in May 2016. Using insight to help affect behaviour change and understand different audiences' wider lives, needs and wishes, as well as their sporting habits and preferences is a key focus, as is using insight to inform advice, guidance and investment decisions.

Contents

Section One: Introduction to Sport England

Section Two: Sport England's This Girl Can campaign

Section Three: Using insight to shape and improve women's experiences of being active

Section Four: Sharing insight and resources to help tackle harassment

Section Five: Tackling harassment in the workplace for those working in the sport sector

Section One: Introduction to Sport England

1. Established by Royal Charter in 1996, Sport England is the government agency responsible for growing and developing grassroots sport.
2. It defines sport widely to include a broad range of physical activities from running in a park, going to the gym or playing an 11-a-side game of football in an organised league.
3. Sport England manages and distributes public investment and acts as a statutory distributor of funds raised by the National Lottery.
4. It uses its expertise, insight and knowledge to support its investment decisions in grassroots sport.

Section Two: Sport England's This Girl Can campaign

5. Sport England launched its National Lottery funded This Girl Can campaign in 2015 because, by every measure, fewer women were regularly active than men, even though 75% of women said they wanted to be more active.

6. Sport England's Active People Survey in December 2014 found that 2 million fewer women than men were playing sport or being active at least once a week and this has been a trend since the Active People Survey began. Sport England's research showed that by every single measure, there was a significant, and stubborn gender gap between women and men's activity levels.
7. Despite this stubborn gender gap, the research found that the overwhelming majority (75%) of women wanted to be more active. Of the 9.4 million women aged 14 -40 in England, we found that 7.1m said they wanted to take part in more sport and physical activity. It was important to look more deeply into what it was stopping women from being as active as they wanted to be.
8. Through multiple focus groups and looking at the extensive insight it already had, Sport England identified the barriers preventing women from exercising or being active. The reasons were hugely diverse, and each barrier could not be applied exclusively to one sole audience. The barriers stopping women from exercising varied across many factors in their life, from age, to life stage, to their previous experiences of sport and physical activity.
9. However, from looking at this it was possible to identify a fresh and unifying insight sitting across almost all of the barriers women had spoken to us about: the fear of judgement. This fear of judgement could be around appearance, ability or priorities.
10. The campaign is shaped by this extensive insight and reflected what women told us at all stages, from campaign planning, to creative development and delivery.
11. Our insight also told us that an overwhelming number of women felt distanced from exercise, due to the portrayal of women and exercise in society. The usual combination of looking perfect and excelling at activity often makes it feel like an exclusive club they're not invited to, and so the This Girl Can campaign set out to change this.
12. By celebrating a realistic vision of women and exercise in England, we created a campaign to provide women with inspiration and support to manage and overcome the barriers stopping them from being active. The campaign creative has stayed true to this insight, featuring women of all shapes, sizes and sporting abilities that sweat and jiggle as they exercise. The women were street-cast, and images were not digitally manipulated or enhanced, they are in fact, the opposite of the idealised and stylised images of women that are so prevalent in media and advertising.
13. So far, the This Girl Can campaign has made a significant impact:
 - 3.9 million women who recognise the campaign have taken some action as a result;
 - 2.6 million women have done some or more exercise after seeing the campaign;
 - 1.3 million women started or restarted activity after being inspired by This Girl Can.

 - Sport England has built an active This Girl Can social media community of over 800,000 people with daily discussion and engagement since the launch three years ago, and the #ThisGirlCan hashtag has been used every day since the campaign's launch.

- The reach of the campaign and the reaction to it – both in the target audience in England and across the world – has been extraordinary, and has surpassed all the industry norms.
15. As the campaign has progressed, Sport England has continued to develop its insight by talking to women about the campaign and about their experiences of physical activity more broadly. A suite of free tools and resources for registered supporters to use to activate the campaign and get more women active is available on the This Girl Can website. As well as marketing materials and imagery, the toolkit also includes access to the insight at the heart of the campaign.

Section Three: Using insight to shape and improve women's experiences of being active

14. The research that Sport England has conducted for its This Girl Can campaign has not been designed specifically to find out about women's experiences of harassments when taking part in sport or physical activity in a public space. Therefore, the responses received to this research have not highlighted issues around harassment in public spaces particularly strongly, and thus this hasn't been a specific priority area for the campaign to focus on.
15. That said, the insight does show that the women's behaviour around taking part in sport or physical activity is primarily based on how they *feel* about it, rather than any practical or logistical challenges (although it is important to address these too). It is important to understand that if women feel uncomfortable, scared, or threatened in public spaces more generally (as Action Aid's recent research found, with 43% of women polled feeling at risk of harassment on city streets), that it is reasonable to assume that this will have a negative impact on women feeling they can exercise and be active safely in public spaces.
16. Organisations working with specific sports that take place in public spaces have, however, undertaken more in-depth and specific research into women's experiences of harassment whilst being active.
17. Women in Sport published its 'Keeping Women Warm to Sport in Winter' report in September 2016, looking at the insight behind lower levels in women's participation in sport and physical activity during the winter months and how to apply this insight to tackle this. One of the findings in the report was around personal safety – Women in Sport found that amongst the women it surveyed, only 6% of women selected personal safety as a barrier preventing them from exercising during the autumn. It found that the women more likely to cite personal safety as a barrier were often younger, living in an urban area, and those with an impairment or disability. However, when asked if personal safety concerns had ever had any impact on their likelihood to take part in sport and exercise, more women agreed, with over half selecting yes or maybe in response to this question.
18. England Athletics, which has partnered with This Girl Can on its successful This Girl Can Run initiative, has built an active online community of women who take part in running. The community represents a real variety of women, in terms of their experiences of sport and demographics. Many are new to running, some have returned to running after being inspired by the This Girl Can campaign and This Girl Can run initiative and some have been running for some time,

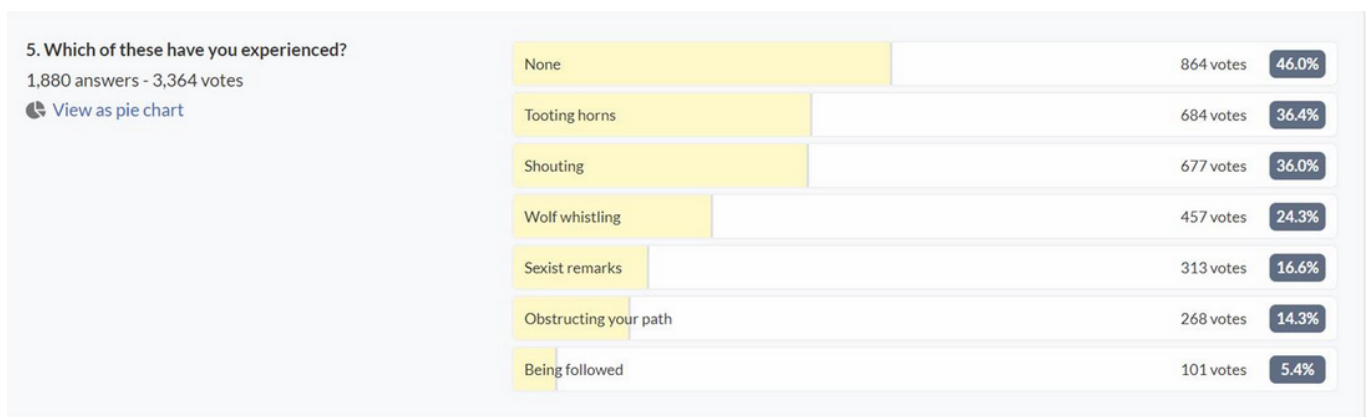
This Girl Can Run initiative survey of women on 'feelings when running in public'

19. In December 2016, This Girl Can Run polled its online community of more than 2000 women about their experiences of running in public places and their feelings about safety and security when running in public.

20. The survey found:

- 60% of women felt anxious about running alone
- Almost half (49%) of women felt their personal safety was the thing that worried them most about going running
- 31% of women had experienced some harassment whilst out running.

21. The survey found that women's experience of harassment constituted everything from wolf whistling, shouting, tooting horns and sexist remarks to having their path obstructed and being followed.



22. Whilst Sport England, through its This Girl Can campaign, and England Athletics, through its This Girl Can Run initiative, are working to help women manage their own judgment barriers in terms of taking part in activity, the sense of fear around safety and harassment when running in public is clearly a very real experience for some women. In response to this evidence that women's experiences of feeling unsafe when running was heightened when running alone, England Athletics also launched an initiative called Run Together, aimed to get joggers running together in groups.

23. It is important to understand that this is not a solution to the issue of harassment of women in public spaces, but a way in which for women to feel safer and more comfortable running (and more likely to take part) in a climate in which a significant number of female runners do not feel safe from harassment. Harassment is part of a wider societal issue around attitudes towards women and girls that needs to be addressed head on. The onus should not be on women to find ways to find ways in which to mitigate the risk of being harassed but on tackling perpetrators of harassment and improving attitudes and behaviour to women more widely.

Using pilots to apply the insight – This Girl Can Swim

24. Whilst Sport England's insight is not specifically focussed on women's experiences of harassment whilst exercising in a public space, many of the approaches driven by insight

and implemented by partners and supporters of the This Girl Can campaign have helped women to feel more safe and comfortable taking part in activity in public spaces.

25. For example, Sport England worked with a number of leisure centre operators on the This Girl Can Swim initiative, with pilot sessions running in leisure centres across England from Birmingham to Eastbourne and Bolton.
26. The This Girl Can Swim initiative used the insight at the heart of the campaign to shape the delivery of women-only swimming sessions, often with female lifeguards and less of a focus on lane swimming and speed and more of a celebration of women choosing to be active and doing so at their own pace. It is important to be clear that the introduction of these women's only sessions was a response to the fear of judgment which women reported, rather than a fear of harassment, however 92% of the women participants that Sport England surveyed after the sessions said that the fact they were female-only was important and 54% said they would not or would be less likely to attend a session if it was mixed.
27. Practical changes were instigated to make women attending feel more comfortable; wall hooks were installed near the side of the pool so women are able to come onto the poolside wearing a robe if they wish, women are able to wear t-shirts in the pool over their swimming costumes if that makes them feel more comfortable and better facilities like working hairdryers in the changing rooms making it easier to fit swimming into a work day.
28. Another key element of the This Girl Can Swim sessions was a pool helper. The pool helper is available to help the women who attend if they want it – they can offer handy tips, words of encouragement or just a friendly hello. The pool helper is there to help women feel supported but not pressurised, and Sport England's survey of women who have taken part in This Girl Can Swim found that 85% of the women thought it was important to have a pool helper at the sessions, with respondents reporting that it helped increased their confidence.
29. Many swimming providers, such as Swales Leisure Centre in Kent, run the sessions at a discounted rate to encourage more women to come and to make the sessions more accessible.
30. Whilst initiatives such as This Girl Can Swim do not stop harassment for occurring in other public spaces, they do provide a safe space for women to take part in physical activity and are tailored to specifically address many of the elements that contribute to the fear of judgment that This Girl Can is helping women manage and overcome.
31. It is clear that the issue of harassment of women and girls in public spaces is a much wider societal issue, rooted in the attitudes towards women and girls. Sport England is proud that This Girl Can campaign is leading the way in normalising the representation of women of different ages, races, abilities, impairments and sizes, in mainstream media, which it hopes plays a small but positive part in changing attitudes and behaviour towards women.

Section Four: Sharing insight and resources to help tackle harassment

32. Whilst Sport England's This Girl Can campaign was designed to address the gender gap in participation in physical activity and to help women manage the judgment barriers that stopped them being as active as they wanted to be, it is happy to share its insight more

widely. Sport England is keen to share its learnings around designing and delivering the campaign with organisations who specifically deal with combatting the sexual harassment of women and girls in public places.

33. Sport England shared much of its insight, as well as learnings around the delivery of the campaign and communications strategies with Think Olga, an NGO based in Sao Paulo, Brazil, whose focus is on empowering women through community and information sharing. Sport England was put in touch with Think Olga by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), as the NGO had received funding from the British Embassy in Sao Paulo.
34. Think Olga's initial project was a crowd-sourced map of 'cat-calling hotspots' in Sao Paulo, a campaign which gained huge traction on social media using *#ChegaDeFiuFiu*, aimed at educating men and women about street harassment and how it impacts women's day-to-day lives. Think Olga wanted women to have a space in which they could document their experiences and for the map to demonstrate the extent of the issue of harassment, and challenge the view held by many in Brazilian culture that cat-calling and whistling was a compliment rather than a form of harassment.
35. Think Olga's research found that 57% of the women in spoke to did not exercise in public places due to fear of violence. Sport England shared its insight about using women's experiences to shape provision of activity (for example, providing women-only sport sessions). Due to the overtly-sexualised portrayal of women in advertising in Brazil, Think Olga also wanted to develop ways to normalise 'real' women playing sport, to help women manage the judgment barriers they often face and to help society more widely understand that real women might sweat, jiggle and have red faces when they exercise and that is not something to be ashamed of.
36. As a result of the insight Sport England share about the This Girl Can campaign and how it shaped the creative execution of the campaign as well as activation, Think Olga launched the Olga Esporte Club – a project to try and reshape the narrative around attitudes to women participating in Brazil. It included provision of taster sessions in safe, fun spaces for women to try and a series of blogs to encourage women to be active, and tips for doing this safely. Think Olga is determined to tackle the societal attitudes that make it difficult for women to feel safe exercising in public, and to provide the right opportunities for women to get active in spaces they feel safe and comfortable in.

Section Five: Tackling harassment in the workplace for those working in the sport sector

37. It is important that those working in the sport and physical activity sector (as with all industries), whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are protected from all forms of harassment.
38. Sport England's free Club Matters resource provides interactive guidance, online modules, toolkits and templates to help those involved in running sports clubs and working in the sports sector. This includes specific modules on managing a sports club, with a focus on governance and implementing policies and procedures to safeguard staff, volunteers and those taking part in sport from any sort of harm.
39. Good governance is vitally important at all levels. Sport England and UK Sport introduced a new Governance Code for the UK, which came into effect in April 2017. The Governance Code sets out the levels of transparency, accountability and financial integrity that will be required from those who ask for Government and National Lottery funds. The code has three tiers and applies to any organisation seeking funding from

us or UK Sport, regardless of size and sector, including national governing bodies of sport, clubs, charities and local authorities.

40. The Governance Code sets out that organisations need to be responsible for determine which legal and regulatory obligations are pertinent to them, including a number which are in place to help prevent harassment within sports organisations and to deal with any instances effectively:

- Safeguarding of vulnerable persons
- Grievance procedures
- Whistleblowing

41. The Governance Code also sets out minimum standards around gender representation on Boards (minimum 30% makeup of each gender) and more broadly demonstrate a strong and public commitment to progressing towards achieving gender parity and greater diversity generally on its Board, including, but not limited to, Black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME) diversity, and disability.

42. Sport England is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to these inquiries. Should the Committee have any questions about this submission or require any further information, please contact:

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