

# **REPORT ON MULTI SPORT WORK WITHIN ACTIVE WOMEN PROJECTS**

NOVEMBER 2011

SECOND DRAFT

## **AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim was to find out what kind of multi sport work was taking place in Active Women projects and what was going well and what the challenges were.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECTS**

The nine projects interviewed were all based in different areas, worked in different ways and were different sized projects. They were all at different stages of the development of their multi sport work – one project had been delivering sessions for several months, one project had only started in the last week and one project was due to start delivering multi sport work in January 2012. Many of the projects shared similar experiences but they all had their own unique experiences and learning to share about their work. (Details of the projects that took part in this research can be found in Appendix A on page 16)

## **METHODOLOGY**

Semi structured phone interviews were conducted with project co-ordinators/ managers. The choice of projects was based on the identification of multi sport work planned in the original Active Women bids. It was not possible to contact all of the projects in the timescales, however nine projects took part in this research. (Details of the phone interview questions can be found in Appendix B on page 17)

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

1. Projects agreed that their multi sport sessions did fulfil the aim of offering young women the opportunity to try a range of new sports that they hadn't played before or for a long time.
2. It is clear that multi sport sessions are being offered in a range of forms and that the traditional definition of 'multi sport provision' needs to be refined to reflect this. An example of good practice has emerged around running a package of different sports at the same time and another example of running a traditional type of multi sports session. However, it is still too early to assess the effectiveness of the other types of multi sport sessions as they have not been running for long enough.
3. Some sports are proving to be more popular than others i.e. Zumba, badminton, basketball and these are often acting as 'hooks' to bring young women to the multi sport sessions where they are then trying out new sports.
4. The multi sport sessions are successfully attracting 'Leannes' in the target age group but the 'open' sessions are also attracting women from older age groups. Projects see this as a benefit as it makes the sessions into more of a social, family activity where 'Leannes'

come along with their mums and grandmas and where it is hoped that 'word of mouth' networking from older women will also bring more 'Leannes' along.

5. A range of good practice has been identified from projects around the planning for sessions/ events e.g. the best facilities to use, coaches, promotion, timings of sessions. However, it is clear that childcare provision is still a major issue for many projects as there is inadequate crèche/ casual childcare provision in place to support sessions.
6. The role and style of the coach is key to the success of the sessions. It is clear that the best sessions have a coach/ member of staff who is able to engage with the young women, help them to get to know each other and develop a 'sense of belonging' as well as running the 'sports' part of the session in the most appropriate way – fun, relaxed, informal, hidden coaching tips, assessing the right level of game play and moving it on before the young women get bored/ too tired.
7. The structure of the sessions varied depending on the nature of the multi sport provision. They all had warm-ups and cool downs, some coaching tips, introduction to the rules and informal game play. If it was a traditional multi sport session, then the coach would move from one sport to another after 15-20 mins to keep the variety, changing the pace of the sport to ensure that they didn't get too tired too quickly, offering a mix of familiar and new sports. Single sport sessions provided a combination of 'hidden' coaching tips, fun games and informal game play gradually building up their skills and knowledge about the sport in a fun, relaxed way.
8. The majority of projects did not have a structured approach to the social side of the sessions – they relied on 'waiting around' time before the session, taking the register, water breaks and informal chatting time after the session. Many projects did not have the space to sit down and chat at their sports facilities although some projects were planning to have one-off social events at regular intervals. The style/ approach of the coach was seen as vital for building up the 'social cohesiveness' between young women whilst they were taking part in the sessions.
9. The role of the project co-ordinator varies between projects but it is clear at this stage that the close involvement of the co-ordinator in the sessions as a participant/ coach/ extra member of staff can be beneficial as it helps them to assess more easily what is happening ready for planning the next stage for the young women e.g. developing young leaders, developing a team, linking to a local club.
10. Projects are already considering the exit routes for their participants and some have built this into the planning of the multi sport provision e.g. the session's coach is also the coach at the local 'exit route' club or taking their participants to the leisure centre to play the sport in this setting.
11. Very few projects have 'tracking systems' in place to assess whether their young women are joining exit routes. There was only evidence from two out of the nine projects that young women had taken up a new sport on a regular basis as a result of their involvement in multi sport provision. Some projects already plan to track the transition

to exit routes through personal contact with the young women and the exit routes or through matching registers. However, this is an area that all projects need to consider and put into place to make sure that their multi sport provision achieves its goal.

12. All the projects interviewed were keen to continue with the multi sport provision and were planning to build on what they had already planned/ achieved. However, it was evident that projects would benefit from sharing the learning about multi sport provision as there is little experience amongst projects of this area of work for 16 -24 year old women.

## FINDINGS

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### 1. AIM OF THE MULTI SPORT WORK

All nine projects agreed that the aim of their multi sport work was to give young women an experience of different sports that they might not have played before or for a long time. As one project manager said, ‘sometimes you don’t know what you like’.

## 2. BENEFITS OF MULTI SPORT WORK

Many projects shared the same views about the benefits of multi sport work. The benefits identified were as follows:-

- ‘Young women who come to play one particular sport will experience other sports that they would have otherwise missed out on’.
- Offers a good variety of sport so that young women don’t get bored.
- Acts as a ‘refresh’ for young women if they haven’t done a sport for a long time
- ‘Young women are more likely to be open to trying new sports at a multi-sport session – if they came to a Zumba sessions and were told that they’d be trying a different sport the following week, they would probably not be very happy’.
- Multi sport sessions can be run in different ways – a flexible package
- Often easier to respond to what young women would like to do
- Good way of consulting young women about what sports they would like to play on a more regular basis.

## 3. THE KIND OF MULTI SPORT WORK THAT IS TAKING PLACE

The commonly held view of a multisport session is a session that is usually held in a sports hall or park for children between 8-14 yrs. It offers a choice of sports either one after the other during the session e.g. football, then cricket then rounders or if there is enough space and enough staff, then two or more sports might be offered at the same time and the young people can rotate round the sports and choose the sports that they wish to play.

This research has shown that projects are developing a number of different forms of multi sport work and that they have different advantages and issues to consider:-

TYPE OF MULTI SPORT WORK	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	ISSUES TO CONSIDER
1. ‘BESPOKE’ ACTIVE WOMEN MULTI SPORT EVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ day or 1 day</li> <li>• Usually once a year</li> <li>• organised by the project</li> <li>• a range of sports</li> <li>• information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High profile for project</li> <li>• Own decisions about facilities, day, time, sports offered and programme</li> <li>• Potential for feedback about sports</li> <li>• Participant feedback forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant time to organise event</li> <li>• Potentially high costs for facility hire, coaches, refreshments, publicity</li> <li>• Lack of certainty about attracting non-sporty women to a sporty event</li> <li>• Lack of certainty/ lack of evidence about how effective one off event is to encourage women to attend regular sessions after event</li> </ul>
2. INTEGRATING ACTIVE WOMEN INTO OTHER MULTI SPORT EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ or 1 day</li> <li>• Several times per year</li> <li>• organised by others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheaper and less time to organise, needs fewer staff</li> <li>• Easier to meet non-sporty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less control over day, time, programme, facilities</li> <li>• May not have space to be able to offer sports for</li> </ul>

TYPE OF MULTI SPORT WORK	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	ISSUES TO CONSIDER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a range of sports</li> <li>• information</li> </ul>	<p>women at non-sporty events</p>	<p>women to try out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have to hire/ buy equpt such as portable athletics tracks</li> <li>• Might not be a 'discrete' environment</li> <li>• Lack of certainty/ evidence about attracting young women to follow-up activities</li> </ul>
<p>3. MULTI SPORT SESSION (different sports in sequence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 hour session</li> <li>• Once per week</li> <li>• One sport, then another, then another</li> <li>• Often 15-20mins per sport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety</li> <li>• Stops boredom</li> <li>• Good for non-sporty and poor fitness</li> <li>• Stops getting too tired</li> <li>• Doesn't matter if not good at the sport</li> <li>• Can repeat each week</li> <li>• Get used to trying new sports</li> <li>• Uses the same instructor/ coach so good to establish rapport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not long enough to give a good idea of the sport, skills and rules.</li> </ul>
<p>4. MULTI SPORT SESSION (more than one choice of sport at a time)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 hour session</li> <li>• Once per week</li> <li>• More than one sport to choose from at any time</li> <li>• Often 1 hour sessions for each sport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young women come for one sport but then try another</li> <li>• Package on offer with variety</li> <li>• Good to come with friend/ family if don't like same sports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to have high facility and instructor costs –may make it difficult to make sustainable.</li> </ul>
<p>5. MULTI SPORT TASTER COURSE (same sport for several weeks, then different sport for several</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 hour session in a specific sport for a set number of weeks, followed by another sport for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young women try a new sport and develop skills</li> <li>• Foundation for signposting them to an exit route</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to lose young women from the course if they don't like the sport.</li> <li>• Lack of certainty about whether 'lost' young</li> </ul>

TYPE OF MULTI SPORT WORK	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	ISSUES TO CONSIDER
weeks)	a set no. of weeks etc.	in the sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of sports to try in more depth</li> </ul>	women will return to do the next sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to respond quickly if young women want to play a different sport</li> </ul>
6. MULTI SPORT TASTER COURSE (different set sport each week)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 hour session every week for a set no. of weeks, a different set sport every week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety</li> <li>• Will try more sports</li> <li>• 1 hour gives time to do some skills, play informal game</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to respond quickly if young women find a sport they really like and want to continue playing it.</li> <li>• Potential to lose young women if they don't like the sport on the next week – will they return?</li> <li>• 1 week is not a solid enough basis for an exit route</li> <li>• Difficult to respond to requests for new sports if the programme is set.</li> <li>• More difficult for young women to bond with instructor if a different instructor is needed for each different sport session.</li> </ul>

It must be recognised that different projects face different circumstances and have different reasons for choosing a specific approach. Although some of the approaches may have a number of issues to consider, that does not mean that projects should not offer this type of multi sport work. Many of the projects in this research had sound reasoning for choosing their approach and had tailored their sessions to make them work and indeed, in one project, the young women had chosen the approach themselves.

#### 4. THE SPORTS THAT ARE PART OF MULTI SPORT WORK

The range of sports includes:-

Basketball	Zumba	Trampolining	Badminton	Buggyfit
Volleyball	Dodgeball	Rounders	Football	Boxercise
Martial arts	Kickboxing	Keep fit	Gym	Running
Spinning	Aquarobics	Swimming	Netball	Salsa

## **5. THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS AND WHY**

- Zumba – ‘everyone’s asking for it’, ‘it acts as my hook’. Young women like the dance aspect, it can be tailored to all levels of ability and fitness, constantly moving.
- Badminton – very popular in some projects – easy to pick up and have a go, easy to organise, popular with Asian young women, some projects already have good links with Badminton England and local clubs.
- Dodgeball – fun, new sport, fast moving, easy to understand the rules and involve everyone.
- Basketball – in some projects very popular with the young age group – 16-18 yr olds. Like the team part of it, playing games together BUT/ in some projects this sport was not popular!

BUT/

- Football has been difficult to set up – some projects have struggled to get a large enough number of girls to attend regularly, this meant that they couldn’t play a game and numbers dwindled.
- Netball – found it difficult to get Muslim young women involved as netball was often played in leisure centres which couldn’t always guarantee a women only environment.

## **6. HOW THE SPORTS WERE CHOSEN**

Projects used different ways to choose sports but the most popular method was to use their previous experience to know what was popular and what might work well. They also wanted to use multi sport sessions to get feedback from young women about what they liked so that they could then offer it in a sport specific setting. One project’s view was that young women might not know what they liked so they would give them the sports to try and then the young women could decide what they liked best. One project chose a different route and organised a series of focus groups with firstly, young mums and secondly, young women at college and this feedback is being used to guide the development of the programme i.e. which sports on which day at what time and the format e.g. ongoing or 4 week blocks.

## **7. PROMOTION OF THE SESSIONS**

Projects had used the following ways to promote their sessions: word of mouth, leaflets and fliers, Facebook, Twitter, posters and mail outs.

Projects said that the best promotion was ‘word of mouth’ – if you got 1 girl involved in a friendship group, then she would bring along 4 or 5 others. College students had said that they would like to be contacted by text messages - as reminders to come to the sessions. Some projects were using facebook and had some followers – one project said that they put information about the sessions and health tips on their facebook page to attract their young women to ‘like’ it.

## **8. PROFILE OF THE WOMEN ATTENDING**

- Demographics – projects said that although they ran ‘open’ sessions, the majority of participants came from their local area and many fitted the ‘Leanne’ profile. Different projects worked with varying levels of social exclusion – one

project worked in an area of high deprivation with young women receiving benefits and facing multiple barriers, another project was working with young mums staying in a hostel and other projects were working with young women with different levels of barriers.

- Non-sporty/ sporty – projects said that the majority of young women attending their sessions were non-sporty. They said that the young women may have played some of the sports previously at school but had often had poor experiences and most did not have a good level of skills. Some of them did not know the rules of some of their sports e.g. basketball.
- Fitness level – some projects found that the fitness level of some of their young women was very low – very often this matched the levels of social exclusion. This meant that some of the young women found it difficult to play some of the sports at the beginning of their involvement e.g. volleyball. Other projects said that fitness levels varied but were not a major issue for running the sessions.

## 9. AGE GROUPS

The question of age groups for the women participating in UsGirls Sessions was raised in almost every project. Projects had two different approaches:-

- 1) Targeted work with existing groups of young women in the 16-24 yr old age group
- 2) Open age group sessions (16+) where all ages were welcome but projects did specific work to encourage the 16-24 year old age group.

1) The targeted work with existing groups of young women worked well for a number of reasons: the right age group and profile of young women, no need to recruit young women, young women already knew each other in the groups so tended to be more confident and had already built a relationship with their key workers e.g. youth worker/ social worker. This made it easier for the project to work with this group of girls.

2) Open age group sessions (16+). All the projects taking this approach to the open age group were keen to emphasise that they would not turn any women away because of their age. One project said that if they turned some people away from the sessions, it might discourage young women in their target age group from attending. Indeed, many projects identified many benefits from having a wider age group at some of their sessions/ events:-

- Provides enough numbers to run activity sessions
- Higher number of participants makes it more likely to be financially sustainable
- Some of the 16-24 year old young women come to some sessions with their mums, do one activity together and then do a different activity separately.
- If young women come with friends and members of their family, it turns it from being a sport session into a 'social, family, networking, having some fun and a chat' session.
- Some of the older women attending might bring their daughters in law, younger friends etc. with them or tell others about the session.

## 10. TIMING OF SESSIONS/ EVENTS

Multi sport events were organised/ planned for both weekdays and weekends. The timing of these events usually caters for young women who are not in work and also for those who do work – typical timings are 12-7pm.

Multi sport sessions tend to cluster around three different time slots:-

- **Weekday mornings** – sessions starting at 9.15/ 10ish to cater for young mums dropping children off at school.
- **Weekday afternoons** straight after college for students – sessions starting between 3 and 4pm before young women go home.
- **Weekday evenings** – sessions starting any time after 5pm. One project said that they ran all their sports sessions either at the weekend or on weekday evenings even though the young women were around in the daytime. Their philosophy was that it was important to establish a routine with these young women, building sport and activity into their lifestyles which would not be disrupted when they found work.

## 11. FACILITIES

Projects used a range of facilities for their multi sport work. This included:-

- **FE College/ University facilities** – good facilities to use with students, familiar, easy to get to. All projects reported good attendances for their sessions on College sites, including for football.
- **Schools** – some were the only facility available in the evenings for running women-only sessions. One project hired the sports facilities at their local Community College on a Friday evening as no other groups were using the facilities at this time and this meant that she could guarantee a women only environment which was important as her local community had a high number of Muslim women. Another project used the local primary school's facilities which made it easy for young mums dropping off their children at school to attend (and gave them some time beforehand for a social chat)
- **Community halls/ community centres/ youth centres** – located in the heart of the community and often seen as more accessible and welcoming than leisure centres. Projects sometimes recruited young women from existing sports/ non-sports classes/ groups using the centre. Sports/ community halls are often very well suited to women only environments.
- **Local leisure centres** – often used as an exit route for some of the sports sessions in the community. Some leisure centres were good at guaranteeing women only environments – e.g. only female staff, taped up windows, blinds, and signs on doors. However, some leisure centres were not able to provide this guarantee which made it difficult for projects in areas with high number of Muslim women.

## 12. CHILDCARE

Many projects found it difficult to find organised childcare to support their sessions and events. Not all leisure centres offered crèche provision and those that did had a limited number of places with high demand for those places and could not reserve places for the UsGirls sessions. Very few community halls/ schools/ community centres had crèche provision. One project had talked to colleagues in the local authority about setting up their

own sessional crèche provision but the challenge of having the right facilities, staff, equipment and OFSTED registration made it too expensive and time consuming to pursue.

One project had been working closely with its local children's centre and was running a session at the centre itself whilst the centre staff looked after the young mums' children. However, this project manager remarked that she didn't know what would happen when she tried to provide an exit route for her young women as there was unlikely to be any childcare provision. Young mums with very young children still in prams/ pushchairs (who were not yet toddlers!) managed to park their pushchairs at the side of the hall whilst they took part in the session and this was a good solution whilst they were at this young age. Some projects were considering the family angle of running sessions so that if they included grandmas, aunts, and sisters at the sessions with the young mums, they might all be able to take it into turns to look after the children whilst taking part in the session.

### **13. COACHES**

#### ***a. Recruitment of coaches***

Projects recruited coaches in a number of ways:-

- The use of coaches that projects already knew and had used at similar sessions, especially if they had come up through the 'participant to volunteer' pathway.
- The training of existing sport specific coaches that they had worked with before in a number of sports so that they could become 'multi sport' coaches.
- The use of coaches from local recreational sports clubs esp. if the club was going to be an exit route for the session e.g. badminton.
- The use of instructors from local leisure centres e.g. zumba especially if the class at the leisure centre was going to be the sessions' exit route.
- One project used their own staff to run the sessions and only brought in specialised sports coaches when necessary.

#### ***b. Attributes and style of the coaches***

Projects said that they looked for the following attributes from their coaches:-

- Able to engage well with young women/ build a good rapport - all projects agreed that this was the top attribute that they looked for.
- Enthusiastic( but not overbearing)
- Sensitive to the moods of the young women
- Shared values with the project and not just there for the money
- Able to create a fun, relaxed environment and be able to assess how the sessions should develop to meet their needs
- Local to the session – one project said that it would be more likely that a local coach would stay with the session on a longer term basis – loyalty and convenience, helping to develop sustainability.
- Female (not all projects said that this was essential - depended on the skills of the coach)
- Experience of being involved in events – pro-active
- Links to local exit routes such as clubs, exit route sessions
- Advantage if coach has already worked with the group and knows some of the participants.

- Commitment to be a coach at the session on a long term basis in order to provide continuity was seen as important –‘social aspect, trust, feeling of belonging comes through the coach’.
- Some projects said that coaches should have NGB qualifications. Others said that a minimum of the SLUK Level 2 would be enough and one project did not feel that qualifications were important for their staff for their general sports sessions.

**c. Role of the coach**

- Most coaches were paid but some were voluntary
- Some coaches went into local colleges etc. and spoke to the young women about their sessions and helped to recruit participants. (Good for starting to build trust and rapport)
- The coach’s role was to tailor the structure and content of the session to suit the needs of the women – different levels of skill and fitness – make it easy for the non-sporty women to join in but make it more challenging for those with better skill levels.
- The coach was responsible for helping the young women to become friends with each other/ to bond especially in a team sport situation.
- The coach needed to give praise and encouragement and not too much pressure.
- The coach should encourage them to go to the exit route – go with them to the new session, talk about it, give confidence.
- The coach should get regular feedback from the participants about what they liked at the session, didn’t like, new sports to try

**14. STRUCTURE OF EVENTS/ SESSIONS**

*The typical structure* of a session was:-

- Warm up
- Skills/ training/ short game or exercise activity e.g. zumba, boxercise, basketball. This part of the session aimed to introduce the skills/ routines and gradually build on what they had learnt over the weeks and give them the chance to improve, challenge themselves and in a sport situation start playing low level fun games introducing the rules and tactics.
- Cool down

Most projects only ran one sport per session/ hour. However, some projects did offer different models:-

One project ran 3 or 4 sports in their multi sport session one after each other, spending only 15-20 mins per sport, giving game pointers if wanted and varying the levels of intensity of the sports to cater for those who were less fit. This project focused more on fun, creating a relaxed session and the social interaction than the sport. This project ran the sports activities directly after a non-sporty activity such as cooking or nails and the same member of staff would create the informality of the session by saying, in 15 mins, shall we do something in the sports hall and then taking them in there as a continuation of what they were already doing – taking away the ‘sportiness’ of the sports session in the minds of the young women. Nevertheless, the sessions often repeated the same sports over a number of weeks so that the young women started to develop their skills and started to learn the rules.

Another project offered a package of different sports at a two hour session on a Friday evening. Badminton was available on a drop in basis for the two hours with a coach available for one hour to help with coaching tips/ skills or the rules. Women could then choose between badminton, zumba, kick boxing and keep fit during the first hour and then could choose another one of those sports for the second hour. Women often came for one sport i.e. zumba but evidence showed that they had then tried the other sports as well and played some of them on a regular basis at the session. The flexibility of the session meant that if someone came half way through the session then they could always play badminton until the next session started. This was designed to suit women on their way home from work/ college or women who were at home with children and needed to wait for someone to come home to take over the childcare.

The majority of projects did not have a structured approach to the *social aspect* of the session. Most projects said that the social chat happened at the beginning of the session when they were waiting for it to start/ when the coach did the register/ during short water breaks or at the end of the session. Many projects said that the facilities that they used did not have anywhere to sit down and chat and it was really difficult if they were using a sports hall with bookings either side of their own timeslot. One project said that they were responsible for providing the sports aspect of the session and would leave the social side to the youth/ social workers. Another project said that the social side was integrated into their sports session. In the majority of projects, the coach was seen as responsible for helping the young women to interact, getting to know each other and it was suggested that this would be achieved through their approach to running the session. One project reported that they were planning to hold a social event at the end of each term e.g. outing/ meal for the girls as they were aware that the nature of their facilities made it hard for this to happen.

## **15. RETENTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Only one project had been delivering sessions for several months and they were achieving good retention rates – they had ‘stalwarts’ who came to every session, some who turned up every so often and a few who had only come to one or two sessions.

Most of the projects had considered how to retain participants. Some projects were looking to provide incentives such as UsGirls merchandise or TopShop vouchers for attending a certain number of sessions. Feedback to one project from young women at a local college was that they wanted to be sent weekly text messages to remind them about the session.

One project said that their participants had signed up to do a sponsored walk/ race and they had used their multi sport sessions to improve their fitness levels ready for doing the sponsored walk. This had proved to be a very successful way to motivate and retain their participants as they had seen their fitness levels improve significantly. They had enjoyed it so much they had signed up for a second sponsored walk. Improved fitness had also improved their playing skills i.e. able to move around the court more quickly and this had helped to retain participants at the session.

## **16. VOLUNTEERS**

None of the projects interviewed had any volunteers supporting their sessions. However, the majority of the projects said that they would need ‘more hands’ as the number of young

women attending their sessions grew. Some projects were intending to use young volunteers from their other programmes who could use it as their voluntary hours e.g. as part of their CSLA but they did say that they would ensure that the volunteers were matched to their sessions. Some of the projects were planning to work with their coaches and young women in the future to offer them opportunities to become leaders and volunteers e.g. badminton, boxercise. One project based in London was keen to find young women wanting to become sports leaders at the sessions so that they could use the Lord Mayor's Legacy Leaders Fund to support the costs of the sports qualification courses.

## **17. ROLE OF THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR**

Project co-ordinators tend to have varying levels of involvement in their sessions. Some project co-ordinators consult with young women about the sessions and then set them up and pop in every so often, some project co-ordinators take part in the sessions with the young women sometimes as a participant and sometimes as a coach and one project coordinator acts as the 'receptionist'/ 'signposter'/ 'motivator' within the session, taking their money, telling them about what's going on, how it works, encouraging them to try new things, chatting to them at the end of the session, finding out what they liked/ didn't like . The project co-ordinators who are directly involved in their sessions have a strong sense of what is happening amongst the young women – they watch their confidence levels increase, skills improve, better levels of social interaction and they form a trust relationship with the young women. However, not all project co-ordinators have the time to do this especially if they have other sessions and projects to work on.

## **18. EXIT ROUTES**

Projects were planning a range of exit routes. This included:-

- Development of an UsGirls session into a local team/ club e.g. the basketball taster course developed into a team and then aim to eventually start a local girls basketball league.
- Links to local 'feeder' sports clubs which would be chosen to match the participants and would be recreational sports clubs rather than performance focused.
- Links to a higher standard club for young women with talent e.g. badminton centre of excellence.
- Use of Sportivate funding to continue the UsGirls sessions.
- Sessions held at community/ leisure centres designed to be continued by the centres themselves if enough participants.
- Training up participants to become session leaders to run the sessions themselves

Projects had also considered the transition process for the young women to the exit routes:-

- Using the same coach from the exit route club/ session to run the UsGirls session e.g. Zumba instructor at the UsGirls session was also the main Zumba instructor at the local leisure centre. She would then encourage them to attend her class and they would feel more confident to join as they already knew her and her routines/ style.
- Giving a handout to the participants with a list of exit routes and contact details etc. The coaches would be expected to talk to them about these exit routes and encourage them to join.
- In some projects the young women were expected to get themselves to the exit route if they liked the sport.

- In some projects, the staff were planning to take the young women to the leisure centre 'exit route' session, supporting them through the whole process – reception, changing rooms, playing sport in a public place.
- Use of a sponsored charity race as the first step to joining a running club.

## **19. THE TRACKING OF THE 'TRANSITION' TO EXIT ROUTES**

As the main aim of the multi sport work is to introduce young women to new sports which they can then take up on a more regular basis, projects were asked how many women had gone from multi sport events/ sessions/ taster courses to sport specific exit routes. This information would have been able to act as a good indicator of the effectiveness of multi sport work, justifying the time spent by staff and the financial investment in this work.

The majority of projects already delivering multi sport events/ sessions did not have any evidence/ information on this aspect of the project. The projects that had been involved in multi sport events had not yet tracked whether the participants had proceeded to attend any other UsGirls sessions. One project said that they had no system in place to track participants and that it would be very difficult to track them as there were so many exit routes – local clubs and sessions at local leisure centres. The project coordinator felt that it was difficult to have a tracking system when the exit routes were out of their control.

Another project said that they did have a way to track participants from their events – they collected contact details on all their feedback forms from their events and these were entered onto their database. Registration forms were also collected from the exit routes that they provided and their database was able to match where participants had attended an event and then an exit route (the project co-ordinator was due to collate this information). This project explained that they had SLAs with their exit routes and as part of this SLA, the 'exit route' providers had to supply them with registration forms and registers – this would make this 'matching' possible.

One project running a multi-sport course did know that almost all of the young women had joined a local basketball club from one of her sessions as she was in close contact with them. Another project said that their staff would be going in person with their young women to the local clubs for the first few weeks until they had settled in so they would be able to track them easily.

When projects were asked about tracking this transition many of them were interested to find out what other projects were doing. Some projects suggested that they would match UsGirls session registers and exit route registers. Some projects suggested that they would offer incentives as a way of tracking incentives e.g. if a participant joined a club and attended a club session 5 times then they would receive UsGirls merchandise.

## **20. WHAT WOULD PROJECTS DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?**

Some projects did identify what they would do differently if they set the project up again:-

- One of the projects running a multi-sport taster course (different sport each week) would give young women a list of all the sports they were going to run with the dates and ask them to sign up to the sports they wanted to do so that they would know whether they were intending to come back.

- Provide a crèche/ childcare
- Do more preparation time with volunteers and young women before the sessions started.

## **21. OTHER COMMENTS**

- One project said that it was hard to balance the high target numbers against the high quality work needed to spend time with the young women – getting to know them, keeping them engaged and involving them in developing teams/ clubs as an exit route.
- One project had signed up to do the Laureus evaluation work but they felt that they could only do it with a group of young mums where it was a ‘closed’ session and the mums were unlikely to walk away from doing it – 30 mins to do it at the beginning and then again at the end was felt to be too long although it was recognised that it would be valuable.
- The funding for one of the project coordinator’s post finishes in February 2012 and so she was focused on setting up her package of sessions and trying to make it sustainable in a very short time.
- One project said that she would like a promotional DVD that she could use to support her presentations to local groups/ young women to get them interested in the project.

## **22. THE FUTURE**

None of the projects said that they would not continue multi sport work in the future, they felt that it was a valuable approach to take and some wanted to increase the amount of multi sport work they were doing. Some projects wanted to link more to the Olympics and local events for 2012, especially projects in London.

It was clear that many of the projects interviewed had the potential to build on their existing multi sport work and to make it a success. Two projects were identified as examples of good practice for offering good quality multi sport work with their young women. Other projects had examples of good practice for specific aspects of their work which would be useful to share with projects. Some projects were just starting to plan/ deliver their multi sport work and it was evident that they would benefit from some additional support in terms of practical advice and guidance e.g. one project had had a good number of young women turn up to a badminton session as part of a multisport taster course but they had lost them as they didn’t want to play the other sports on the following weeks – a possible way forward would be for the project to set up a regular badminton playing session either separately or as part of a restructured multi sport taster course e.g. play badminton for first 20 mins then try a new sport and then finish with badminton. Projects were keen to find out about the work that other projects were involved in and to learn from their experiences. Very few sports development projects have been involved with multi sport work apart from working with children and young people aged 8-14 years – it might be worth considering the development of a peer project mentoring scheme/ advice network to help projects to learn from each other and help their sessions to improve.

*Report author: Caron Walpole, November 2011*

## APPENDIX A

# SEMI STRUCTURED PHONE INTERVIEW ABOUT MULTI SPORTS SESSIONS FROM THE ACTIVE WOMEN BIDS

OCTOBER 2011

### BACKGROUND

The aim of these phone interviews is to assess how projects are using multi sports sessions as part of their programme.

These phone interviews need to answer the following two questions:-

- **Do 'one –off' multi sports sessions/ events help young women to choose which sport they would like to play?** Are they successful, do young women attend them, do they find sports they would like to play? Does it motivate them to join a sport specific course? If so, which format works best and what needs to be put in place to help young women to go from attending the multi sports event/ session to attending the sports specific session on a regular basis (i.e. helping to make the transition).
- **Do regular multi sports sessions help young women to participate in sport on a regular basis?** What do they like/ dislike about them? Are there any favourite sports? Is there a favourite format/ structure etc. Do women go from attending a regular multi sports session to a sports specific course/ exit route. If yes, how long does it take and what kind of support do they need.

### PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name/ title role of interviewee
2. Confirm when/ if delivery has started and if multi sports sessions/ events have been planned and/ or delivered.
3. Confirm which form of multi sport session they are using:-
  - **One- off multi sports events BEFORE sports specific courses (4 projects)**– offering young women the opportunity to try out different sports at a single event so that they can then make their choice about which sports specific course/ group they would like to join.
  - **One-off multi sports events/ festivals AFTER sport specific courses (1 project)** – this gives young women the chance to try out a range of new sports after they have already attended a sport specific course so that they could then choose to attend a different sport specific course. It is also being used to introduce new young women to the sessions.
  - **Multi sports sessions DURING sport specific courses (1 project)** – this gives young women the opportunity to try out new sports during their regular sessions.
  - **Regular multi sports sessions (1 project)**– this gives young women the opportunity to play a range of different sports at a regular session but these sessions also sit alongside sport specific sessions that the same women could attend as well or instead of.
4. Confirm the purpose/ philosophy of multi sports sessions/ events – has this changed since the bid was submitted?
5. Explore how easy/ difficult it was to plan/ set up - e.g. find coaches, venue, eqpt, promotion, recruit participants.

6. Confirm which sports are being offered at the multi sports session/ event.
7. Confirm how the sports have been chosen – reflecting the content of the sport specific programme, by the coach, by the participants or a combination. What happens if participants ask for a sport not on the programme?
8. Explore how the multi sports coaches have been chosen – already known, which qualifications, which skills do they think are most important, gender, from local community etc.
9. Confirm what kind of structure the sessions/ event follow e.g. everyone playing the same sport at the same time and then all moving onto the next sport together etc. in the same session OR several sports taking place at the same time at the session. How does the coach move onto the next sport – what cues are used?
10. Confirm the nature of the session/ event – are there some skills, is it just informal playing, is there any coaching, is there any competition, are there any co-operative/ team building games, what does the coach do if some participants know how to play a sport but the others don't etc.
11. Is there a social aspect to the session – before/ during/ after and how does it work?
12. If it is an ongoing multi sports session, what is the retention rate like, are new women still joining or not? Plus/
  - Which sports do the women like best/ not like at all?
  - What is their playing skill level like? Variable, better in some sports?
  - What do they like best/ not like about the session in general?
  - Has anything changed at the session in response to feedback from the participants/ coaches etc.?
  - Are there any volunteers? If so, how were they recruited, their profile, their role etc.
  - How easy is it to encourage women from the multi sports session/ event to then go to a sports specific session – what has worked/ not worked, have they tracked it?
  - How long do women need to play a sport at a multi sports session to feel confident enough to do a sports specific activity
  - Is there anything that they would do differently if they ran the session/ event again?
13. If it is a one-off multi sports event:-
  - How easy was it to get women to attend – how many and profile?
  - How did they get women there?
  - Which sports did the women like best/ not like at all?
  - What were their playing skills like?
  - What do they like best/ not like about the event in general?
  - Were there any volunteers? If so, how were they recruited, their profile, their role etc.
  - How easy is it to encourage women from the multi sports event to then go onto a sports specific session – what has worked/ not worked, have they tracked it? Which sport did they choose? Were their skills good enough to play sport specific?
  - Is there anything that they would do differently if/ when they run the event again?
14. Anything else?