



US GIRLS WALES LEARNING REPORT

APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2017



LOTTERY FUNDED
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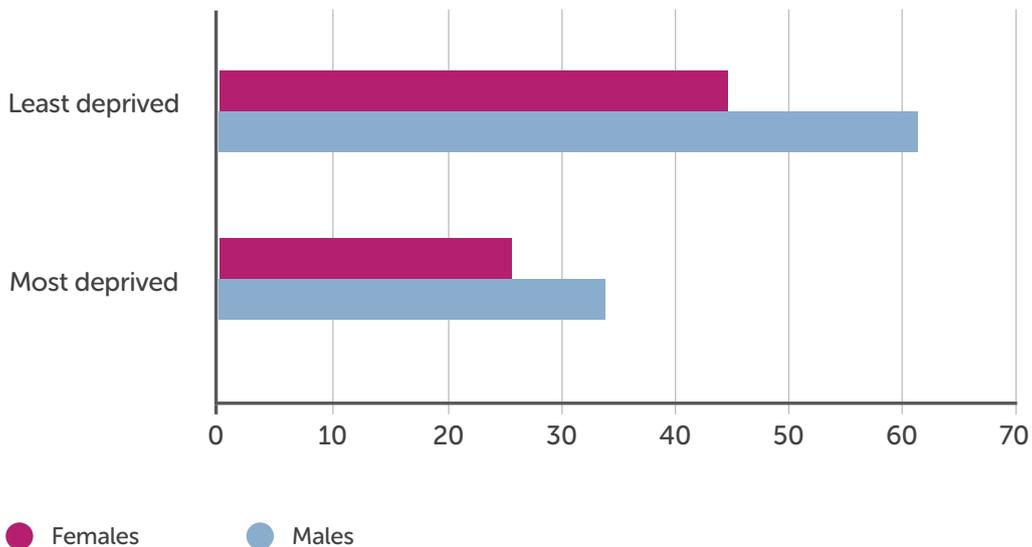
Where did Us Girls start?

The evidence of need for the Us Girls programme was based on two key issues:

- Poverty has a huge impact on levels of sports participation: 46% least deprived school age young people are “hooked on sport”, compared to only 35% of young people living in the most deprived areas (School Sport Survey, 2013).
- Gender has a significant impact on actual levels of sports participation: 46% of men are “hooked on sport”, compared to 32% of women (Active Adults Survey, 2014).

Double Jeopardy for sport activity:

Females living in deprived communities



These two issues combine into a devastating impact on girl’s participation in deprived areas of Wales. Only 25% of disadvantaged women are “hooked on sport”: there is double jeopardy.

At the start of the Us Girls journey, StreetGames participation was approximately 24% female and 76% male.

Following the last two years of driving the Us Girls programme in Wales, StreetGames participation now shows female engagement at 49% compared to 51% male engagement of the pan Wales profile.

The Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs of Wales is a leading example of the change in gender profile of participants, based on their engagement with the Us Girls programme. Moving from a traditionally male dominated demographic to now having a 2:1 ratio of female to male sports provision in North Wales.

What did StreetGames aim to do?

StreetGames aimed to drive a significant step change in sports participation for disadvantaged young females throughout the duration of the two-year programme. With expertise in building and developing strong and successful networks, StreetGames were well-positioned to create an Us Girls 'consortium'. Through successful networking and influencing, the organisation set out to change and support the behaviour and practise of community sport institutions, in order to make female sports participation a routine part of their core work, especially in communities challenged by poverty and disadvantage.

Launching on the 28th May 2015, Us Girls was a bold initiative aimed at closing the gender gap in sport by getting more females living in poverty in Wales more physically active. By providing activities at the **right time**, for the **right price**, in the **right place**, in the **right style** and delivered by the **right people**. The programme set out to focus on a specific market segment – 'Little Lisa' – a young female aged between 13-19 years, inactive/semi-active and living in a Communities First (deprived) area.

The closest market segment to our target group in the Sport Wales typology is 'Lisa' and while there are differences in the age bracket, the socio-economic status is the same. In the Us Girls programme to date, we have referred to market segment Lisa to mean disadvantaged 16-19 year olds, and so we are using the term 'Little Lisa' to include the younger end of this target segment– the 13-19 year olds.



Journey Progress to Date

During the course of the last two years of the Us Girls programme, the network have utilised a diverse range of tools in order to reach and engage the target group of 13-19 year old inactive and semi-active females, living in deprived communities across Wales.

There are approximately 36,000 13-19 year old females living in poverty in Wales. The target for the Us Girls programme was to reach just under 5,000 of these women and girls.

In summary to date, the Us Girls programme has achieved;

- **5,623** new 'hard-to-reach' female participants
- Of which **4,110** are returning 3 x per quarter or more
- **3,132** Us Girls sessions delivered in the Community
- **130** new Us Girls Volunteers
- **50** new Coaches and Leaders supporting Us Girls sessions
- StreetGames participant profile has moved from **24% female** to **49% female**
- **87%** of the participant group have been from Communities First areas



'Little Lisa' in 2017

'Little Lisa' 2015

In 2015, at the start of the project we knew, based on existing learning from Us Girls in England and the work already undertaken in parts by the network, that 'Little Lisa' would be more likely to engage in sport and physical activity if...

- She could go with her friends
- There was a fun, informal feel to the session
- Little Lisa was made to feel safe, welcomed and valued
- She wasn't going to be judged for being 'no good'
- Little Lisa could identify with the session leader and others around her
- The session wasn't just focused on traditional sporting offers
- There were incentives, rewards and festivals
- Little Lisa had opportunities to bring her mum or older sister
- She could wear whatever she feels comfortable in and won't get challenged or judged for that
- Sessions could avoid venues with mirrors
- Sessions took place where male peers couldn't or wouldn't be able to stand and watch
- The session leader and venue were consistent in terms of expectations – the smallest change in these could be the trigger to drop-off

'Little Lisa' 2017

In May 2017, after two years from the start of the project, we have learnt that (as well as what we already knew in 2015) 'Little Lisa' is more likely to engage and sustain her activity if...

- Project staff spend time before the start of the project to listen to her and her friends about what they like, don't like, what's important to them and what they need the sessions to look and feel like – and to continually review this throughout the lifespan of the project
- A robust and genuine relationship is built between the project (leaders, volunteers, venue, etc) and Little Lisa
- There is a 'fit for purpose' social media platform for communication and engagement – driven by the young people's needs
- Taster sessions and drop-in sessions are actively encouraged – including messaging around joining back in even after a few weeks off
- Volunteers and session leaders are 'girls just like me' most probably from the local community
- Leaders and Volunteers never expect her to perceive herself as 'Sporty'...even if she's been attending sessions for a long period of time
- Leader and Volunteers spend time understanding her friends and wider pressures on her and them and build the activity requirements around these pressures on an ad-hoc basis wherever possible
- Coaches and Volunteers build in plenty of time for chatting and texting and don't split Lisa up from her friends unless there is a significant reason or you've given her plenty of notice
- Project leads find opportunities for days out and mini group events – often just from listening to the group
- There is an opportunity for 'pre-pre' engagement such as watching a session on-line and having a virtual chat with someone from the session to get to know more about it before Little Lisa turns up

The Us Girls Network in 2017

Us Girls Network 2015

In 2015, based on the existing StreetGames network, there was no specific Us Girls funded offer in Wales;

- Women and Girls provision across the Doorstep Sport and wider Community was sporadic and had not had a platform to be a priority focus in this context
- There was no dedicated resource to drive the development and delivery of female physical activity via the Doorstep Sport network
- There was limited conversation about female specific need when driving and planning local agendas for sports delivery in deprived communities
- Limited training around Women and Girls provision across the StreetGames and wider network had taken place
- There was limited brand awareness of Us Girls in Wales (the programme had been running in England for three years)
- Female volunteers infrastructure to drive women and girls participation in deprived communities had not been developed
- There was no female specific social media or communication platform for female participants, volunteers and projects across the Doorstep Sport network
- There were little or no organisations with insight led plans to engage with inactive or semi-active females, living in poverty, into sport/physical activity



The programme has helped us with driving a positive shift change in culture where female participation in sport is promoted and celebrated”

- Gemma, Session Leader, BGCW, Llandudno.

Us Girls Network 2017

In May 2017, two years after the start of the programme in Wales, the network has developed to include;

- A mobilised network that consists of 33 projects with meaningful plans to engage with...inactive/semi-active females living in poverty. We also know that sections within the StreetGames network have adopted the concept and practise of Us Girls delivery
- Diverse partners such as Housing Associations, Homeless Shelters and non-mainstream activity offers
- Evidence of mainstreaming and embedding of female sports participation as a priority focus for local communities in deprivation across Wales. For example, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales are now using the Us Girls methodology consistently across their provision to engage young females in sport and physical activity
- A social media platform for Us Girls in Wales, that includes Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- A strong and vibrant female-focused volunteer offer to support the delivery and development of the Us Girls programme and local offers
- Stakeholders that have received women and girls participation and activator training e.g. WRU, GDW, LA's, HE & FE provision
- An on-going, positive conversation about female sports participation across the Doorstep Sport Network and beyond along with a commitment for a sustainable, long-term approach to embedding the Us Girls offer in Doorstep Sport Clubs across Wales
- Two-years of dedicated resource to drive, develop, raise the profile of and up-skill the Community Sport Network around women and girls sports participation and this has resulted in a cascade effect across the sport, physical activity and health sector. As part of the 2017-18 mainstreaming plan we will be working to strengthen this

StreetGames' role in the Us Girls journey

The Network

StreetGames has been a change agent for girls living in poverty and their sport and physical activity opportunity. The Us Girls programme has been a good example of how StreetGames plays a role ensuring organisations have robust plans for sport and physical activity for young people living in poverty. **StreetGames has moved the mindset of a number of organisations, practitioners, volunteers and community groups** with how they can engage girls living in poverty into sport and physical activity.

StreetGames has **mobilised and supported** 26 organisations to drive a local Us Girls project, across 33 sites. Many, if not most, of these organisations did not have plans in place to engage with girls, living in poverty. **We have provided projects with 1-1 support** from our existing staff team as well as our expert Doorstep Sport Advisers. Our 1-1 support, wasn't simply about making sure projects had plans, budget forecasts and monitoring systems in place, it has covered everything from frontline, operational issues to strategic level policy changes. **Our support has been a regular, consistent support model over the last 2 years**, where projects have had the opportunity to be both challenged and supported on their approaches.

As part of our role in leading the network of projects, we have ensured that **we have been a listening organisation** (98% of our network said they found us approachable in our latest network survey). We did this from the start where, through good consultation, 70 partners helped shape the initial business plan for Us Girls. **StreetGames drove and facilitated these partnership discussions** to ensure the Us Girls plan was a reflective plan of the cumulative partner feedback.

Whilst the 26 lead projects have been the focal point of StreetGames support during the Us Girls programme, **StreetGames ensured that the programme had opportunity to grow beyond the boundaries of the lead partners**. For Example, non-funded projects such as Ceredigion Us Girls have used the brand and the network to drive their female participation approach at a local level and have experienced significant value from being able to access the wider network and learning.

StreetGames is proud that it recruited a workforce made up of practitioners who have 'front-line' experience and a track record in engaging with young females living in poverty, through sport and physical activity. These staff members **worked hard to understand the network of partners and guided them through the complexities, challenges and opportunities involved in supporting the target group**. In addition to this, **we are proud that we developed a network of organisations who engaged and connected beyond the control of StreetGames** for example, projects from Caerphilly, visited projects from North Wales to share good practice between participants. **This was one example of many, of the programme's 'snowball effect'.**

StreetGames managed all communication through the network of partners. The social media campaign, with the support of S3 Advertising helped the brand gain 1.3m impressions through the various social media platforms. StreetGames drove this at the request of the network. **We ensured that Us Girls projects were publically celebrated** for their success on local levels. For example, many projects were supported by StreetGames to connect with their local press and media.

Event and festival experiences were a key part of 'Little Lisa's' journey. **StreetGames ran a number of events such as 'Us Girls Rocks' in Cardiff and 'Us Girls Zones' at the 2016 Multisport event**, as well as equip and support local projects to run their own Us Girls Rocks Events, which have become an important part of some local projects annual calendars, such as Newport Live.



StreetGames are very active in relation to promoting and supporting our project"

- Jenna, Us Girls Swansea.

Getting the Offer Right for Little Lisa

Throughout the journey of the Us Girls programme, **we ensured that we provided a platform for the network of partners to learn, understand and share** their experiences, challenges and successes. This was vital to ensure the projects engaged effectively with 'Little Lisa'. The Us Girls Coffee Mornings and Network Meetings, which StreetGames facilitated, were a great place to capture these conversations, collate them and share them with the wider network.

StreetGames ensured that there was a culture of 'Learn, Understand and Share' amongst the network of partners. Our strong, robust, insight and research was placed at the heart of many of the challenges we presented to the network and **we made sure that ALL organisations had access to this learning** to help shape their localised plans. During the course of the programme, StreetGames has built the foundations of the 'Elements of Engagement' as measures of behaviour change across the network. StreetGames has led the shift change in conversations about evaluating long-term change in the core themes of motivation, awareness, experience, confidence and resources, aligned to Sport Wales' new approach. within the Community Sport Network.

"Using the Us Girls methodology and learning from StreetGames has been so important for our on-going club development and female retention."

- Melissa Anderson, Valleys Gymnastics

Project Management

StreetGames ensured that all information from across the network was gathered and reported back to Sport Wales on time. **We gathered and developed a large depth and breadth of case studies and snapshot stories to share the learning of the programme on a national scale. We reported in an open and honest manner,** ensuring that we shared the good stories, including the challenges organisations face, when engaging with females living in poverty. We also ensured that the learning and profile of Us Girls was part of our discussions at a key stakeholder level. For example, Welsh Government's Communities First programme were fully aware and supportive of the programme as a result of our discussions.



We would not be where we are now, in terms of female participation, without the partnership with StreetGames and the learning and support of the Us Girls programme"

- Grant Poiner, Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales.

What have we learnt on the Us Girls Journey in Wales so far?

During the journey of the Us Girls programme over the previous two years, there are key areas of the programme that offer fundamental elements of learning – positive aspects as well as inherent challenges – and these have been identified as contributing factors to the journey of the programme thus far. These key areas include;

- Engaging 'Little Lisa' (target audience of inactive and semi-active young females).
- Using Consultation to inform approach
- The approach to Activities and Sessions
- Engaging the Network
- Volunteering and Coach Development
- Events and Festivals
- Building the Brand and Social Media



Engaging 'Little Lisa'

- The initial engagement was a lot more challenging than originally anticipated and as new projects started to develop, a need to test new methods away from traditional approaches to sport engagement was further identified. This meant that more time and resource was needed to be invested into trying to understand and engage with the target group – we have referred to this as “pre-pre engagement” – meaning that relationships with these ‘hard-to-reach young females’ has to start well before they have even contemplated engaging in the most basic form of physical activity.

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I really love coming to my Us Girls session 'cos it's fun and I get to choose what I want to try"

- Us Girls Participant, South Wales.

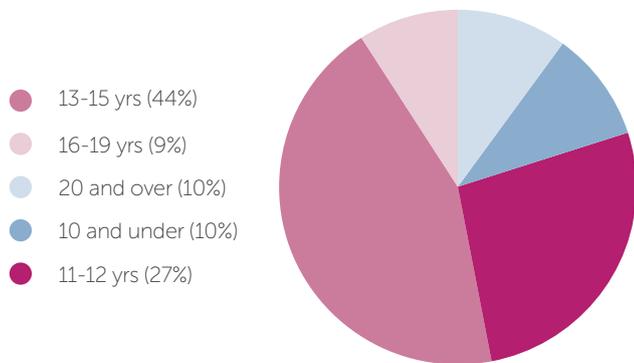
CHALLENGES:

- Supporting honest and reflective feedback from the network about what hasn't worked in engaging with young females in the community sport arena it has proven challenging.
- It has been much harder to try to understand why something hasn't worked, compared to why something has been effective.
- The insight we have been able to gather where sessions haven't worked include – a lack of initial consultation with the target audience (or initial consultation completed, but not following up with the specific actions), a lack of a joined up approach 'on the ground' such as clash of times for young people, too big a mix of age groups – off-putting to older girls and a lack of consistency in delivery at project level – building and sustaining relationships is vitally important to these girls.

I prefer to come to a session where it's girls my own age...I don't really want to take part with younger girls"

- Us Girls Participant, aged 16

- Analysing the overall age segmentation of participants highlighted that the Us Girls brand in Year One, attracted the younger (or below) proportion of the initially proposed 13-19 age group. This changed slightly in Year 2 when this issue was identified and challenged resulting in some new approaches and best practice shared across the StreetGames network. E.g. College Us Girls provision fitting into weekly timetable in a more streamlined manner, as well as consulting with the older girls as to what incentives would hook them into a session.



- Insight has told us that across the board, reaching and engaging the older age group has been one of the biggest challenges to the Us Girls programme. Where projects successfully managed to draw in a mix of ages, the age range was too broad on a session basis, the older girls would naturally opt out. Building sessions via consultation with older girls – and often being exclusive about age range was important to the 16-19 year olds – they repeatedly told us **they did not want to take part with younger girls.**
- Incentives** for the older girls were different compared with the younger age range – where the 13-15 year olds were incentivised by Us Girls branded merchandise such as water bottles, wrist bands and bags, the older girls requested itunes vouchers, hair and makeup and clothes vouchers, as some examples.

SPOTLIGHT:

- Us Girls Caerphilly developed an effective approach to engaging the right target group into a more physically active and sporting lifestyle. Launched in May 2015 and has since attracted over 150 'Little Lisa's'. At the launch, the project brought partners and young people together to explain the purpose of the programme and to run a taster.



- All sessions range in style and delivery dependent on the group consultation. For example, gym sessions, 'chill out' sessions where the girls would come along who were not yet comfortable to try physical activity.
- Us Girls Caerphilly identified girls who have 40% or less attendance in school and then engaged with them to run consultation and slowly introduce them to sport through their interests. They work with local schools and other organisations to identify and deliver activities that the girls are interested in, eliminating as many barriers as possible.
- The engagement sessions varied from mood boards, to thought walls and taster sessions.
- The project extended their targeted approach to working with young mums living at a homeless shelter in Caerphilly. They had no sense of time, routine and their health and wellbeing was poor. The Us Girls project leader engaged with them on a weekly basis running consultations at the homeless centre and building relationships in the 'pre-pre' engagement approach; these were pampering nights, general chats and film nights all to understand and engage the girls. Some of the young mums were really concerned about both their child's and their own routine and wanted to work on getting their children tired for bedtime and jointly more physically active.
- The project put a walking bus in place to the local parks, with the young mums and their children. This eventually developed, linking with a local fitness company, Creazione Fitness, to provide gym sessions. The participants received a free crèche facility, which eliminated the child care barrier for the particular older age group.
- Feedback from the group identified that they felt 'comfortable' being a part of the Us Girls brand, eventually feeling confident to focus on their fitness and well-being and begin regular participation in a more formalised sporting environment. Some of these Young Mums are now Volunteering and running their own Us Girls sessions in the local community.

"Being part of Us Girls has changed my life".

- Young Mum, Us Girls Caerphilly.

Caerphilly now has 6 Us Girls hubs set up with around 15 girls attending each session, 15 might not seem like a huge number but when we are taking about non active and not engaged then we are talking good numbers..."

- Andrew Diggle, Us Girls Project Lead

- At the current point of the Us Girls programme, we have started to see an increase in the participation of the post 16 years age demographic who are engaging in the project. This has been due to the fact that the Colleges programme has taken longer to develop during the course of the project – based on their conflicts of infrastructure and resource and therefore this area of development has only recently started to build momentum.
- Coupled with this, as part of the embedding and mainstreaming plan for the next 12 months, a priority will be placed on supporting projects to engage with the 16-19 year age bracket, which has proved a much more challenging group to reach and engage for the network.
- Reasons for this older age group being more difficult to engage with include; a natural transition from School to College reducing the opportunities for engagement, college, work, life balance as young females' lives become more complicated and busy, the priority for sport and physical activity changes.
- Insight over the last two years, has repeatedly told us that **if friends stop taking part in physical activity, this has a significant negative impact on an individual female continuing.**
- Whilst the target group was 13-19 year olds, the nature of StreetGames to reduce inequalities in sport, meant that sessions were inclusive and no individuals were 'turned away'. This meant that participants were actively encouraged to bring friends and family members. **Young women want to exercise with their friends, and this was found to be an important engagement and retention tool.**
- The high proportion of participants from BME groups is also encouraging at 8% (against a target of 4%). The BME engagement has come directly from project focused work in high BME areas, including Us Girls BME projects in Newport and Cardiff, which have taken a direct approach to

engaging these communities, working alongside the BME Sport Cymru team and Lead BME Community Development Officers to ensure there are fit for purpose Us Girls offers for these communities – such as female only venues, specific and suitable times of day, content of the session, listening and consultation.

CHALLENGES:

*Getting the offer 'right' for the older age group has been an issue across the board in the Us Girls network. Colleges have got a captive audience here and where it has worked well, a variety of fit for purpose incentives have been used to engage and retain the older girls in sessions. Older girls perceive themselves to be significantly **time poor** and engagement is much more likely to be **sporadic** rather than regular in the earlier phases of engagement.*

- Engagement across disability demographic has been significant in the Us Girls programme to date, at 17% of the overall population (against a 4% target). The higher figure is an 'unknown' to the Us Girls community, as there has not been a targeted approach to this offer. However, local front-line knowledge informs us that some of the female participants from deprived communities were more likely to disclose themselves as having a learning disability. This is not something that has been a focus of the Us Girls network to date, however, it is something to consider in the next twelve months of mainstreaming the programme.
- During the course of the two year programme, we asked projects to capture a 'before and after' measure of physical activity levels (PAQ-A, 1997).
- A total of 51 complete sets of data were recorded across the network



The Us Girls sessions are a great thing for the girls to attend. Jessie has become more confident since joining, she is really happy with herself and has lost a good bit of weight. I hope the project continues as the girls have regular exercise sessions to attend”

- Jessie’s Mum, Conwy

- The results showed that the average entry point for an Us Girls participant was scored at 2.1, with a follow-up score of 3.4.
- Whilst we recognise that this is not statistically robust, due to the small sample size, using this as a ‘barometer’ in the change in PA levels, the Us Girls participants are showing **that they become more active during their engagement in their project.**
- If we use this as a barometer for the trend in change in physical activity engagement across all of the Us Girls participants to date, this is a significant shift in the ‘right’ direction for harnessing behaviour change amongst these ‘Little Lisa’s’. As part of the mainstreaming of the programme moving forward, we will be developing individual journey stories around the impact of this behaviour change on ‘Little Lisa’.



CHALLENGES:

- *The administration of the PAQ-A for the Us Girls projects proved challenging, due to the nature of the frontline delivery.*
- *Some of the issues faced by projects was that the irregular and ad-hoc nature of engagement of the females with the projects in certain areas meant that administering follow-up questionnaires proved difficult.*

- *In many instances, the females did not want to leave their full name, and specifically with BME groups, the females did not want to leave their name at all. This meant coding of the data gave an additional layer of challenge for the projects in tracking and obtaining follow-ups, which inhibited the sample size obtained.*
- *Just based on the nature of the very hard-to reach girls that projects have been working with, administering a survey with these girls has been perceived as a barrier to their engagement, so many projects refused or struggled to use this form of analysis.*
- *Moving forward in the next twelve months of mainstreaming, individual journeys of movement from inactive to active will be explored at project level.*



The Us Girls club could be a way to support other young people to take part in sessions, but for some it’s about building relationships and gaining confidence through an informal approach”

- Project Lead, Denbighshire.



Using Consultation

- During the first phase of the programme, projects were supported intensively to develop effective consultation methods to engage with the target group. Tried and tested examples that worked well for the network, have included; Informal themed **'chats'**, **pamper sessions**, quick and simple **iPad surveys**, **Facebook** discussion boards, **Twitter** questions, 'Big Brother' style **diary** room chats and **'Mood Walls'** – as seen here.
- Understanding the barriers faced by the target group enabled projects to move into a second phase of establishing delivery and developing the sessions based on learning from the consultations. Prominent barriers such as body image, low self-esteem and confidence, meant firstly that a pragmatic, step-by-step approach was required to successfully engage and later introduce the physical activity element. Lots of **reassurance** and **support** was required by project leads and volunteers to support the girls into sessions – what the network refer to as significant amounts of **'hand-holding'**.
- There have been specific examples of cross-sector working to support consultation with young females as a route into engaging with the programme, for example, the use of **Referral Forms** from organisations such as Youth Service, Pupil Referral Units and Communities First to provide Us Girls Lead Officers with direct access with 'hard to reach' young females. This provided an opportunity for organisations to carve out a simple pathway to support the outreach and engagement of 'Little Lisa's' directly into the Us Girls programme.



When engaging with the participant group, don't be afraid to try things and get them wrong"

- Victoria Price, Project Lead

It has been very beneficial to have StreetGames delivering some consultation work through the Us Girls programme which has identified some specific needs for the target group. This exercise has shaped the future offer that the Sport Cardiff Girls Together programme will deliver in terms of practical provisions"

- Sport Cardiff



SPOTLIGHT:

Nominated for 'Us Girls Project of the Year' at the National StreetGames Awards 2017, the Blaenau Gwent Us Girls Project have developed four school sessions, two community sessions and have recently expanded their work into Pupil Referral Units and Special Education Schools. Through their engagement with the participant group, they have amassed experience in gaining an understanding of mental health and anxiety issues faced by females. As part of their sustainability plan they are working closely with Active Gwent with a **further £8,000 investment** into developing further sporting activities for inactive girls and young women living in poverty.

The project identified that in order to engage and retain participants there needs to be **'buy in' right from the start** of the project. With support from StreetGames via training, sharing best practice and understanding challenges, the network have enhanced their ability to attract girls and young women in to taking up more sport and physical activity.

As part of this process they have faced a number of challenges, which meant they needed to invest more time into their engagement and consultation with target group on an on-going basis. At the start of the project in Blaenau Gwent, the key Us Girls Co-ordinator brought multisport as an activity into Abertillery Comprehensive School without any prior consultation with the target group. Initially there were a number of girls that participated, but in time it was noted that they started to 'lose interest'. This called for a new approach - going back to planning and consultation.

The target group then opted for badminton and dodgeball, so in response to the sessions were shaped around this preference and regular future consultation has helped to reflect what the group want to engage in and continue doing.

Currently **over 20 previously completely inactive females** are engaging in the weekly sessions and the staff at the school identified a change in attitude towards school sport provision and more positive attitudes towards timetabled physical education.

In order to have the ability to react to the needs of the target group, projects have identified that it is important to engage

and consult with new and existing participants on an on-going basis to ensure that the offer is always **informed and fresh**. For example, some projects explored new opportunities with participants as their confidence and ability grew.

- **'Walk to Run'** groups and **'Colour Runs'** have been particularly popular in Blaenau Gwent, Conwy and Caerphilly. Without effective engagement and such opportunities may not have been identified.
- After receiving Us Girls training and having discussions with StreetGames, the Welsh Rugby Union used this methodology of Us Girls consultation to help support the development of their women and girls rugby participation offer during the course of the last 12 months.

Head of Women's Rugby, Caroline Spanton says "The Us Girls approach has undoubtedly helped us shape our community offer and the Gamechanger Officers have used consultation with local girls to listen to what they'd like to see and do in sessions"

SPOTLIGHT:

One of the projects within the Us Girls network that spent a significant amount of time understanding, engaging and consulting with the target group was Us Girls Caerphilly.

*In order to achieve effective engagement with the females in the local area, they found that **talking and listening** to them about their barriers, needs and likes was a fundamental element of getting the girls to attend sessions, but also to keep them coming back. For their effort, they won national recognition - the Us Girls Project of the Year at the StreetGames National Awards 2016 – just 12 months after it was first launched.*

*The project was recognised for its successful work undertaken in Lewis Girls High School, Heolddu Comprehensive and Rhymney Comprehensive School – working with the 'hardest to reach, inactive girls on the 'alternative timetable'. Since its launch in May 2015, more than **300 girls** across Caerphilly County Borough have taken part in the Us Girls programme. The scheme has the highest rate in Wales of girls taking part in sport and physical activity sessions, with a retention rate of 92%.*



The consultation proved to be so important in fostering positive relationships with these girls and really helped to break down barriers and build communication”

- Lauren Thomas, Us Girls Project Co-ordinator

Engagement and consultation **takes time** and needs a step-by-step approach at the pace of the participant. The participants engage well with peers/ volunteers who can relate, share experience and motivate them. Informal approaches work with the target group i.e. casual chats, themed activities such as pamper sessions and Big Brother Diary Room style, where girls can feel safe in their environment.

The Approach to Activities and Sessions

- The two-year programme introduced 158 new activities, with a total of 3,132 sessions delivered across Wales. On average the Us Girls network are delivering 45 sessions per week, which equates to more than one session per project for this target group. The focus on effective consultation with the participant group assisted in steadily building sessions that demonstrated the ‘RIGHT OFFER’ – at the right price, place, time, style and delivered by the right people. As reflected in snapshots and case studies, it has been necessary to challenge and learn from issues in order to develop new and improved methods and approaches

SPOTLIGHT:

In Conwy, the project took a step by step approach to successfully engaging with the target group. Learning from the Us Girls methodology, creating an ‘informal, fun and friendly’ environment, they held an incentivised pamper evening to create a safe atmosphere to collect information. Using informal discussion and big brother style ‘diary room’ set-ups, they were able to collate useful insight into understanding how to break through the barriers that women and girls are facing, and what constitutes the right sporting offer for that cohort. Using the initial and consistent consultation process they were able to put on a number of **taster sessions** based on the groups’ interests’ i.e. **fun fit, girls only multisport and beginners running groups**. The impact of the taster sessions was that this gave the girls an experience of the types of activities that

they could do, stripping away **concerns** and **anxieties** about trying sport and activities and this then provided them with confidence to engage with new things. The success of the project to date is down to the on-going engagement and consultation to reflect the interests of the target group. They have also engaged extensively with the StreetGames network and other projects in North Wales to share best practice and learning – which has been “incredibly valuable”.

Along the way, the success of Conwy’s ‘Fun Fit’ session has also been down to practical learning experience and recognising that identifying challenges can help to develop good quality offers that are just right for the participant group. Prior to the extensive consultation carried out with the local demographic, the project admitted that at times, based on the ‘global picture’ of barriers faced by females, it was quite natural to make ‘assumptions’.

For example, the group said that they wanted to try out **Cross Fit** and on considering the venue for the activity, the project felt that the ‘place’ would not be suitable based on the environment i.e. male dominated, large hangar type building with daunting equipment. Conwy’s ‘top tip’ for the network is that the participants actually responded to and engaged well with this environment – this might not always work, but it shows that consultation is key and that target group in that area have **ownership** of what they take part in and commit to.



I enjoy coming to the club and taking part in StreetDance. I also enjoy the sessions as they keep me occupied after school”

- Participant, Merthyr Us Girls.



Avoid assumptions – just because young inactive and semi-active females are not ‘sporty’ or regularly active – does not always mean that they don’t want to try challenging or risky activities – in fact – trying extreme or very untraditional activities actually allows inactive females to reduce their fear of judgement – in that they are not expected to be ‘good’ at those skills or activities, therefore reducing the pressure on themselves.

- Collective learning from the network has highlighted that more time and resource needs to be invested into engaging, consulting with and understanding the target group in order to achieve the ‘right offer’. Although this is recognised as vital and a positive aspect of the programme, the amount of time that is needed to be invested in engagement and consultation, has meant that in a number of cases, actual delivery of sporting activities has been delayed to ensure that projects attract the right target group in order to create optimum impact – but it is important that for local projects starting this process, that there is acceptance of that.
- There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to what makes an Us Girls session successful. The caveat to this is that, it is imperative that the project staff keep their ‘finger on the pulse’ and continually engage with the girls to elicit on-going feedback from the group – as once they start losing interest or becoming dissatisfied with the sessions – they won’t always be upfront and honest about this with the session leader – they’ll just opt out and stop attending sessions.
- In terms of the feel of the session – the **pace needs to be dictated by the girls**. Regular



Initial consultation was key to the success of Us Girls in Conwy, we wanted the target groups’ voices to be heard, instead of us making assumptions – it is quite easy to generalise and think of barriers that ‘aren’t there”

- Sarah Roberts, Us Girls Conwy Project Lead

opportunities for ‘**chat breaks**’ and ‘**text breaks**’ have become an integral part of Us Girls sessions. Projects have identified that this is important for the girls and makes them feel comfortable, so rather than discouraging this, it is actively encouraged, as and when appropriate.

- Setting of **mutually agreed ground rules**, so all girls feels safe and supported in the environment that they’re exercising has become increasingly important – especially in the age of social media. The taking of photos and videos on mobile devices needed to be discussed as a group as this has been noted as a significant barrier for Us Girls participants, not wanting to feel exposed (or the risk of) by their peers on social media – “**being sweaty**” or “**looking stupid**”.

The top five activities chosen by the Us Girls participants over the last two years have included:

- **Multi-sport** sessions: providing variety and choice, participants respond well to regular break options – less anxiety from the young females that they will be in a traditional ‘skills and drills’ environment. When ‘non-sporty’ females know that it’s a multi-sport or non-traditional sporting session, this seems to reduce the initial anxiety that inhibits engagement
- **GlowSports**: adaptable to a number of sports and activities, gives an informal fun feel and assists with body image barrier – as with the ‘no mirrors’ aspect that we had previously learnt from Us Girls in England – the Glow Sports mechanism takes this a step further – “**it’s in the dark so no can see me!**”
- **Fitness Classes**: a variety of fitness classes have been popular, trying something new with friends in a ‘safe, fun and friendly environment’ – again, the lack of a traditional sporting approach really helps to engage

the 'non-sporty' girls who perceive themselves to be unable to participate in traditional sport

- **Dodgeball:** Fun and easy to set up – non-traditional, dip in and out of the activity, a real perception that “it’s just a bit of fun”
- **Running:** Partnerships with Run Wales, local walk to run groups and events have helped to make running a popular activity – Colour Runs and Charity Runs have proven particularly engaging and popular as vehicles to galvanise engagement across the Us Girls network
- Videos from Us Girls projects in Newport and Blaenau Gwent demonstrate the ‘feel’ of an Us Girls session:

Blaenau Gwent ‘GlowSport’:

<https://t.co/CIO2snH8mP>

Newport ‘Fitness Class’:

<https://t.co/yFq5Rm0c9z>

- The Us Girls Network has also seen an increase in partnerships with NGBs on a local level, links with WRU, Tennis Wales, Run Wales and Welsh Cycling has supported projects to provide opportunities for participants to try new sports at events, take part in free training and test new offers. This has been an important aspect of ‘bringing the traditional sport sector with us on the journey’ and will continue to play a significant role in the mainstreaming of Us Girls programmes into doorstep sport in the next 12 months.

SPOTLIGHT:

Newport Us Girls, BME Refugee Women’s Project was set up in partnership with BME Sport Cymru and the Sanctuary Project in Newport, in November 2016 a women’s only exercise and sport session was launched for Refugee and Asylum seeker women within the Central Community Cluster. The ladies were already an established group, taking part in English language classes in Bethel Church every week as part of a project which helps people build friendships, restoring a sense of belonging and community, and offering practical support to people from refugee and asylum seeker communities in Newport.

The female only session is delivered on a fortnightly basis, ranging from boxing and martial arts, circuits, sports, hoola hooping and fitness videos as well as offering general health and lifestyle advice. The general feedback from the group is that they didn’t have any opportunities to take part in any form of exercise and physical activity and were keen to try new things. The barriers included **childcare, financial reasons, religious boundaries and kit**. This session is in a women’s only session including coaches in a space in which they all ready access so this breaks down many of the barriers, the session is also very **participant led** so they can try new things that they desire and that suits their needs.



You Retweeted



FamilySkills Newport @FamilySkillsNew · Mar 16
@FamilySkillsNew and @bmesportnewport doing hoola hooping & circuits at Bethel Community Church Sanctuary! Thanks Lauren for a fun session!



Newport Sports Dev and Lauren Boyd

6 5

Engaging The Network

- StreetGames promote a strong **'network' approach**, which has been the driving force behind the momentum of the Us Girls programme, and this is a key factor in the growth of the Us Girls programme to date. Mobilising a diverse range of over 150 organisations to include Local Authorities, National Governing Bodies, Charities and Youth Services to adopt and advocate new and innovative approaches designed to appeal to the target group – with a bespoke, individual, localised approach in each and every community project. Mobilising the network in this way has facilitated the most appropriate engagement and reach to the specific target group of inactive young females.
- *The Us Girls programme has further helped to strengthen and broaden the existing StreetGames network via new partners and engaging in new sectors. The integration of these networks has been hugely beneficial across the community sport sector, and new conversations have occurred. Prior to the development of the programme and business case, StreetGames brought together over 70 organisations from the network to consult, collectively demonstrate a need for the programme and to discuss the potential structure needed for young females living in disadvantaged areas. Consultation*



Without the opportunity to mobilise the network in an agile and dynamic way, a broad brush approach and a one-size fits all model would have prevented the effectiveness of project engagement"

- Us Girls Project Lead, Neath Port Talbot

was facilitated via regional meetings, expressions of interest, phone calls and emails.

- Consultation with the network enabled partners to; Understand and agree parameters (ages, poverty, approximate numbers, reporting etc.), clarify vision of project, define the characteristics of the 13-19 year old girls, gain local project insight on whether the project was viable, learn about a different approaches that have worked locally. Whilst this was incredibly important at the start of the project – what we have learnt is that this is a valuable support and asset for a wide-reaching programme throughout its life course and something that StreetGames will be supporting moving forward with the mainstreaming of the Us Girls projects across Wales.

SPOTLIGHT:

Since 2011, Valleys Gymnastics Academy started to see trends of high level of gymnastics engagement between the ages of 3 – 7 years, but then from about the age of 8, a drop-off in attendance. It is this trend that saw VGA try and prevent this drop-off and retain participants and look to wider partnerships to learn and develop with – StreetGames playing a significant role in this and welcoming VGA into the Doorstep Sport Network.

On the back of learning from the StreetGames Network, the VGA family started doing regular consultation with the young people and their families, listening to needs and issues and looking at alternative offers. Trying new activities on the back of these consultations have proved effective - cheerleading has been popular with younger teens, aged 13-14 years and 'FreeStyle' has attracted teenage boys. Specifically, Us Girls Cheer, targeting inactive,

hard-to reach girls has proved successful in reaching and retaining this target audience with over 50 girls engaging in Us Girls activity. In 2017, VGA now see significant retention in the older age groups and a growing number of volunteers that re-invest their time back into the Academy. Two of the volunteers who classed themselves as 'not sporty' became involved with Cheer at an after-school session and now volunteer at sessions at Cwmbran Stadium, helping younger girls and acting as **role models**. Traditionally, gymnastics as a sport is high performance and does not usually retain older teenagers well, but VGA are proud of the fact that their club does retain these young people. **"Instagram is huge for our young people"**, Melissa (VGA Director) explained, "if I don't post the pics they've asked me to within a couple of hours at the end of a session they get on my case!". Using **incentives** and **merchandise** has been powerful, and **"rewarding the young volunteers is always important"**.



Engaging with other organisations has played a fundamental role in the success of VGA to date. Broadening horizons, challenging the norm and providing new ideas and ways of working. The engagement with StreetGames in supporting VGA with this has been crucial and VGA now see themselves as a key member of the StreetGames network. Training up Volunteers and on-going staff CPD has proved to be valuable in VGA's journey so far. **"Investing in staff pays dividends"**. Making sure that the young people have a good time in every session. For those young people who have struggled to engage with physical activity previously, one 'bad session' can make the difference as to whether they come back the following week – so the VGA culture is to make sure that all young people leave having had a good time.



Engage with network stakeholders at the start and throughout the duration of a programme to support local delivery and encourage innovation. Regular local, regional and national meetings, workshops and informal coffee mornings can be a good way to learn and further develop approaches.

- The creation of an 'Expert Group', consisting of gender equality experts in the field of sport, helped to inform the network, share best practice and advise on how to develop the programme effectively – a key part in the early development of the project. The Expert Group were not formally brought together throughout the duration of the initiative – and this, on reflection, should have been supported and developed to provide an independent 'critical friend'.

CHALLENGES:

Use of an 'expert working group' made up of stakeholders who have diverse experience of working within the field of women and girls, sport and poverty as a regular mechanism for any ideas and innovation hub would have proved useful.

- Over 6 regional meetings were held with the network to facilitate key insight and learning, in Year 2 as development perpetuated, we learnt from the network that they wanted to be brought together more often to continue sharing. Us Girls Coffee Mornings were held on 9 occasions, creating an **informal space** out in the network for local partners to get together to share learning, tips, challenges and resources. This will continue after the two-year period as a valued sharing method, with project leads hosting meetings nationally – already taking place in Valleys Gymnastics, Crumlin, Bulldogs Gym Neath, Channel View Leisure Centre. Local Doorstep Sport Advisors have helped to relay information and learning.
- Sharing learning and challenges was identified as a vitally important aspect to move the programme forward and recognising what still needs to be done. The network consistently tell us they value the brand and access to other bespoke programmes to assist in the delivery of Doorstep Sport and the Us Girls programme. Frequent advice and support from expert staff and Doorstep Sport Advisors – who are frontline focussed and see what is happening 'on the ground' has also been important and much needed when working with a project that requires new approaches and challenges.

Engaging with 'frontline focussed staff' who have direct communication with young people, volunteers and project leaders to continually inform and feedback on approaches used by projects is crucial in being reactive and responsive in community sport engagement.

- 36 new projects delivered by 26 host organisations have used the Us Girls' methodology in Wales. Regional delivery was spread across the North, South and West. It is important to note that in addition to the established funded projects, the versatility of the Us Girls programme as a StreetGames offer meant that non-funded organisations could utilise the branding and methodology, for example, in Ceredigion, Sport Development run a weekly Us Girls session and have engaged in StreetGames events. Also Mountain Ash Comprehensive School adopted the Us Girls branding and recommended consultation methods to engage more girls into fitness and rugby.



At the StreetGames National Awards 2017, Us Girls Blaenau Gwent were shortlisted for Project of The Year Award in recognition of the innovative work that they do in schools and the community to get disengaged, inactive girls actively taking part in meaningful sessions and activities of the participants' choice.

Their work has more recently extended to Special Education Schools and Pupil Referral Units, which is down to strong local networking and shared targeted approaches to successfully engaging with and delivering sessions for the target group. The work carried out has given young girls with mental health, behavioural issues and low self-esteem, the confidence to engage in sport and physical activity with their peers without the fear of being judged. "Us Girls brings girls together to play sports that they enjoy without any boys being around, and also you get to make new friends. I feel welcome at Us Girls (sessions) and the coaches make everything fun so no one is left out."

Utilising a variety of mechanisms to share information and communicate as a network has proved effective – non-traditional approaches have included an Us Girls Blog, and Coffee Mornings, as well as the more traditional email newsletter, meetings and social media channels. There continues to be a real sense of collaboration and a desire to share across the Us Girls network – from project staff to the individual participants – a real sense of Us Girls community is at the heart of the programme.

- Benefits of regular Us Girls network meetings and coffee mornings have included a buddy system for project staff, ideas 'hot-housing', delivery of women and girls training, Q&A support, building relationships across the sector, sharing best practice, developing solutions to challenges, project visits, project promotion. "Fab morning – learnt so much that I have taken back to my project that has helped me", Jenna.



Coffee Mornings are proving to be a good way to get partners around the table to take ownership of local projects - PCSOs, Sports Development, Youth Services, Communities First and more recently got together in Bryncynon to kick-start plans"

- Project Lead, Rhondda Cynon Taff

CHALLENGES:

In developing and supporting the network a major challenge has been individual organisational change during the course of the two-year programme, stalling progress in places, along with a reduction in resource for frontline sport and physical activity at local level. Building corporate relationships and investment into the network has been a challenge – and on reflection probably over ambitious given the infancy of the programme.



Picture shows Sam Gator, the 2,000th Us Girls participant.

Volunteering and Coach Development

- The programme generated 37 new leadership opportunities, well below the anticipated numbers. Due to the complexity of the target group, the barriers and the investment of time required to engage participants into their destination of choice and development; the numbers in this area were considerably low.

A number of best practice approaches collated across the network demonstrated that this area could be improved with the right approach; however, the true scale of change would not be evident across a two-year programme, but rather as a longer term objective. Initiatives such as the 'Big Sister' programme and the 'Gossip Girls' initiative, started to create the right environment where women and girls would start to consider these opportunities within a 'safe environment'.

SPOTLIGHT:

A continued strength of Newport Live's Us Girls project is 'Gossip Girls' which is a volunteer programme for the older girls in the communities. There are now 65 Gossip Girls, who continue to build on their responsibilities such as consulting with girls locally, promoting opportunities, assisting with activities and feeding back about the programme. By having these volunteer role models it is having a positive impact on others in the communities also by encouraging other young women and girls to take part in the sport and physical activity sessions, but also gives them an

aspiration of becoming a Gossip Girl themselves – which provides a platform for continued long-term engagement for the individual participant and a sustainability model for the project.

- 2,000th participant Sam Gator attends Risca Comprehensive and lives with her foster parents in Caerphilly. Originally shy and unsure about taking part in the Us Girls sessions, Sam now attends two local Us Girls hubs, one in Bedwas and the other in Lansbury and participates in a variety of different sports, including Basketball, Touch Rugby, Circuits, Netball and Dance. Encouraged by Us Girls Big Sisters who have helped build her confidence and engagement, Sam is now one of the regular faces in these sessions and is being encouraged to lead within her favourite activity of Netball.



Thanks to Us Girls and the Big Sisters I've become much more confident and eager to try new sports. Without the Big Sisters' constant support and encouragement, I would not be the person that I am today"

- Sam Gator, 2,000th Us Girl



At the start of the project I didn't know how to coach sport, but through the Big Sister Programme I will soon be achieving my Dance Level 2 qualifications"

- Big Sister, Caerphilly

See video here: [youtube.com/watch?v=E0sr5pDpz-I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0sr5pDpz-I)

"There is a lot to be said for the volunteers making their own choices about what they want to do and their particular destination of choice, shaping their own, informed learning experience."
- Louise Evans, Us Girls Caerphilly"

SPOTLIGHT:

Supporting growth across the network, Aneurin Leisure Inspire Volunteer Awards 2017, announced 'Us Girls Volunteer of The Year' Lowri Suter. The award is for the volunteer who devotes their time to supporting and championing the Us Girls programme. Lowri dedicates a great deal of her time to the Us Girls programme in Blaenau Gwent, helping to plan and deliver both school and community sessions on a regular basis. Lowri was part of the team that helped to establish and shape the first Us Girls community club in the area and now volunteers her time there on a weekly basis. She goes above and beyond and is willing to volunteer her time at almost every Us Girls session/event that she can. Lowri continues to devote her time and energy in to the Us Girls programme, providing local opportunities for young women and girls and the wider Us Girls network. Lowri has worked alongside the Us Girls Wales team and other Us Girls partners to share good practice and implement change both on a local and national level. She is also a valued member of the Communities First team, supporting youth workers in their daily role of reducing anti-social behaviour by engaging with hard to reach young people in Blaenau Gwent.

- However, moving through Year 2, the recruitment of coaches has continued to remain challenging. A key insight to this, from the females involved, was that the young women that did become engaged as a volunteer, did not want to move into a more formalised coaching or sports leading pathway, instead remaining as a volunteer, providing them with a freedom of choice as opposed to more responsibility in a Coaching role. From the Us Girls participants' perspective, the use of volunteers and the 'Big Sister' approach was more attractive

and less of a barrier to engagement, compared to the use of a coach within the sessions.

SPOTLIGHT:

StreetGames, learning from the previous two-year Us Girls pilot in England, identified that volunteering in its traditional sense was failing to attract the intended scale of girls and young women and it was rather difficult to change perceptions of what it means to be actively volunteering in a local session or sport club.

The Big Sister programme developed in Caerphilly, and adopted by projects in Blaenau Gwent and Conwy; changed the face of volunteering using the Us Girls approach and methodology to actively consult, empower and engage participants to shape their own pathways. Using this concept, the programme provides a fun, friendly and informal atmosphere – with a big focus on friendship and engaging participants by **mobilising local champions** and role models to inspire more girls and young women to try out new and exciting sport and physical opportunities in their communities. The Big Sister programme has engaged over **24 new volunteers** and is continuing to upskill and develop Little Lisa's into coaches of the future. Being a fully formed constitution, the Big Sister programme will sustain beyond the duration of the two-year project to ensure that this great work grows and continues.

A further successful example from the network can be seen at Brickfield rangers, where the Us Girls sessions have been supported by the development of female coaches and mentors who have adapted the way they engage with young females to hook them into the sporting offer in a traditional club environment.



Many of the young people have developed, had great fun, made new friends with many of the coaches also developing as individuals and improving their delivery to young females."

- Catherine, Project Leader, RCT.

The girls absolutely loved the festival and the activities have inspired the girls to try out a wider variety of physical activities, as well as gaining new ideas for the Rhyl Us Girls festival this year”

- Jody, Project Lead, Rhyl.

Us Girls Events

- 48 events have taken place throughout the life span of the programme and have been successful in providing an opportunity for participants to take part in a fun and vibrant day to try out new activities and feel part of ‘something bigger’. Feedback from participants has been positive, with many trying new activities and experiences that they wouldn’t normally have the chance to in their local community or project. From a network perspective, events also enabled partners to be a part of the programme, introduce incentives, new sports and possible **exit route** opportunities.



SPOTLIGHT:

On the 27th April 2016, StreetGames held an Us Girls Rocks Event to mark the important milestone, celebrate the campaign and spotlight the 2,000th ‘Little Lisa’ and her achievements throughout the programme to date. As part of the programmes’ headline measures, events are an important aspect of delivery to engage and provide opportunities, awareness and an experience to try something new within a safe and friendly environment. With 25 different taster activities on offer, key partners such as WRU, British Rowing and Glow Sport provided opportunities for the 180 girls and young women that attended on the day.

- Newport Us Girls led the way in their events programme attracting over 1,000 attendees over the two year programme. Factors such as **central location, peer promotion and incentives**, assisted in making the events a success, based on feedback from the participants.
- The StreetGames ‘Us Girls Rocks’ package which include the mix of music, fun and festival atmosphere has continued to be attractive for the Us Girls audience – particularly with the opportunity to try bite-size tasters of activities on the day. This has been particularly useful for the network, as it has provided a platform to offer new activities and the engagement from the girls on the day of the event has been a useful indicator of appetite and latent demand. A key example of this would be Glow Sports – which has captured the imagination of the girls and provided them with an opportunity to try more traditional sports such as badminton and football, in a dark environment where they won’t perceive themselves to be **judged by others**.



- Use events to offer new products and **bite-size opportunities** to build on innovation and ideas and to gauge whether there is an appetite for these from the target audience.



- Events and festivals have also proved a really effective way to continue to build on insight and consultation – those new to the event and also those that are already engaged in Us Girls. Chatting to the females in this informal manner in a place where they feel relaxed and comfortable has been particularly useful for the network and frontline staff and something actively encouraged by StreetGames.
- Events attracted mainly the lower segment of the target age group, which called for further consultation with 15+ to get the offer right. Smaller more bespoke events – at venues associated with older girls such as Colleges, were more effective in reaching the older age bracket.
- Getting the location right can often be an issue i.e. the annual event at Cardiff and Vale College had the potential to attract participants from across all 3 regions, but logistically this was difficult for transport and timetabling for the students. Smaller, more local events seem to be the more appropriate method for this target group.

CHALLENGE:

Event promotion needs to be right and well timed – using consultation from Us Girls Volunteers can be useful here. There is balance to be made between the focus of the event being sport/physical activity versus the additional incentives such as hair, beauty, music, etc – but vitally important if the tone is even marginally skewed.

- Bespoke local events such as the Big Sisters on Tour – which involved the Big Sister Volunteers from the Caerphilly Project doing a 3 day visit to North Wales Us Girls projects and trying new activities during a residential visit, has proved successful in bringing them together and rewarding the existing volunteers, as well as providing inspiration for some of the younger Us Girls participants who look up to the Big Sisters as role models.

Building the Brand

- The Us Girls brand has been an important element throughout the programme, resonating more so with the younger age segment, which could often be a challenge when trying to attract older participants. However, sub-brands such as the 'Big Sister' Programme assisted in this area. **Merchandise** and **branded** kit were important to the network and helped with local visibility and incentives.



In Year One, Us Girls started to build social media platforms, however 'reach and message' were a regular challenge in terms of having real insight and advice around how to best increase following and support. In October 2016, StreetGames worked with S3 Advertising to develop **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram**. S3 Advertising set up, managed and grew the accounts over the course of a five month period, developing the brand online and providing an easy access outlet for the girls and partners involved in the Us Girls movement.

- Over the course of the campaign a number of key **influencers** within the sport and active sector became reliable partners of the @UsGirlsWales. Through tagging Us Girls in daily posts, liking content and replying to posts, these channels became valued supporters of the Us Girls brand and it's messaging, such as RunDivaRunWales, Runningmamacat, BGUsGirls, DoItYourWay and BGC North Wales. The social media campaign included support from S3's in-house video team, who visited Us Girls projects in Newport and



"We are surrounded by Us Girls, therefore no one is judging each other" Read more from @USGirlsConwy : Goo.gl/ESMIY5 #UsGirlsWales



One the top performing tweets from @UsGirlsWales

Blaenau Gwent to capture the sessions and give the social media followers insight into how the sorts of activities available.

- The @UsGirlsWales Twitter account started from scratch and at April 2017 there were 533 followers, with 291,100 impressions. A total of 1,845 likes and 435 Link circles, with 897 re-tweets and 128 replies!
- The Us Girls Wales Instagram account became a significant 'go-to' platform for information and content during the course of the last two years – with a focus of positive imagery and quotes. So far, there are 128 followers, 517 likes, 20 comments and 572 video views.
- The main Us Girls Facebook page has a steady growth, with 72 followers, 4,990 lifetime likes, a reach of 337,020 and over 1 million impressions, with posts reaching 283,167. However, local project facebook pages have proved more popular across the Us Girls network with more bespoke local information and content compared with the national page.



One of the top Instagram posts.

The use of effective social media which has up-to-date and engaging content across all platforms is vitally important for this target audience of 'Little Lisa's'. For these girls there is an inherent expectation that everything they do will have the opportunity for engagement with their social media channel of choice. Keeping up to date with this has been a challenge for projects – with a key solution developing of using **young volunteers** from the sessions and projects to take responsibility for writing content and managing facebook pages for example. For future development this is going to continue to be a high profile aspect of engaging and retaining females in Us Girls projects.

- **UsGirlsBesties** has been the Us Girls Wales flagship social media campaign, celebrating the sharing of positivity, friendship and happiness aspects of physical activity experiences. Us Girls participants were encouraged to upload a photo of themselves with their friends during an activity via any social media platform, with comments about their experiences. This was incentivised by the opportunity to win Us Girls branded merchandise and the 6 most inspired 'selfies' were chosen as winners.

CHALLENGES:

Mainstreaming Us Girls into Doorstep Sport as an 'offer'. Due to the strength of the brand, Us Girls has often been referred to a 'separate' initiative rather than an embedded approach – the wider network has often seen this as a completely separate aspect of Doorstep Sport – which it isn't. The next 12 months of mainstreaming work will be critical to the success of the Us Girls approach in the longer-term.

Summary Position of Us Girls Programme

Headline Measure: Number of Participants the project will impact upon

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
1997	3141	2755	2482	4752	5623

The number of new participants that engaged with the Us Girls programme over the course of two years was 5,623. Insight tells us that these girls were inactive and semi-active at the starting point of their engagement with the project. However, the initial target age range for the programme was 13-19 years. The data shows that a significant proportion of the females engaged were on the lower end of the age range and/or below with a core group aged 11-12 years. Projects have informed us consistently over the last two years that these are the females that have been more readily motivated to engage with the Us Girls offer, with the older age group proving much more challenging. However, during the latter stages of the programme, the approach used by the FE Colleges has started to support the growth of engagement of girls aged 16-19 years and StreetGames is committed to learning from and supporting these projects in the next 12 months.

Headline Measure: Number of regular (1 or 2 times a week) participants that the project will attract

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
182	2448	273	1662	455	4110 (attending at least 3 x per quarter)

The main challenge with this headline measure has been the ability of the StreetGames data capture system (Views) to monitor Sport Wales' definition of regular participation (1 or 2 times per week). By the nature of StreetGames participants, the national system has been set-up to record attendance per quarter (across 12 weeks) as not all projects offer sessions on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. However, in consulting and gaining feedback from the frontline projects across the two year programme, it is evident that regular weekly participation for this target audience (especially the older age group) can be challenging. The smallest triggers can cause a participant to 'drop-out' of a session – often life challenges such as time, school, college, work, social commitments. However, insight has shown us that small triggers – often positive prompts from social media and peer encouragement and incentives can be enough to push them back into a session – “as long as the door has been left open” by the project staff.

Headline Measure: Number of new activities the project will deliver/ offer (eg football, dance, fitness)

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
28	88	42	70	70	158

The Us Girls network has seen a significant increase and uptake of new activity sessions across the programme. By the sheer nature of the way in which the girls have been consulted and encouraged to 'think out of the box' to find suitable activities that they find engaging and fun, has resulted in a wider variety of dynamic activity provision. The Us Girls participants have shown a real desire for latest trends – activities such as glow sports, mini-trampolining, swimming, mountain climbing, rowing, rugby, dance, fitness, climbing, have all featured on the Us Girls programme to date.

Headline Measure: Number of activity sessions the project will deliver per week

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
2184	1836	3276	1296	5460	3132

The total number of sessions that have been delivered per week across the two year programme to date is under the original target figure. This is very much based on the fact that as a network, the Us Girls programme under-estimated the complexity and challenge of the initial pre-engagement process to reach these inactive females, prior to facilitating their activity attendance. In summary, this meant that activity sessions have been slow to develop across provision and there have been a number of times where sessions have not worked. Sessions have been moved, changed and adapted to try and find the right fit solution for the target audience on a local level.

Headline Measure: Number of New Coaches/Leaders the project will develop

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
83	37	125	13	208	50

This area of the Us Girls programme has been particularly challenging as the 'obvious' choices of Coaches and Leaders that would traditionally be identified and supported in training to up-skill would be the young volunteers emerging from the programme. Therein lies a two-fold challenge for this initial programme – the volunteer basis for the Us Girls was starting from scratch, so a natural delay in the development of Volunteer into Coach/Leader has seen a natural lag. Secondly, and probably more importantly, consultation with the Young Volunteers has shown us that there is a very limited desire to transition from Volunteering, into a Coaching or Leading role for this particular group. Reasons such as time pressures, a lack of self-confidence and perceive ability or simply apathy towards responsibility has hindered this process. This remains a focal point for the mainstreaming and long-term sustainability plan for the next 12 months.

Headline Measure: Number of New Volunteers the project will recruit/develop

Year 1		Year 2		Cumulative	
Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
133	67	199	63	332	130

Whilst there has been more growth in the body of Volunteers to support the Us Girls programme, the issues for the opportunity to develop effective Volunteers within the programme remain the same as above for the Coaching/Leading aspect. Effective volunteers are drawn from the local participant network who have grown from their project and therefore this has proven to take time and significant support at front line level. Volunteer development will remain a significant focus for the next 12 months of the mainstreaming approach.

Summary of Us Girls Network

At the point of the end of the two-year Calls4Action funded programme, the Us Girls project landscape is as follows;

- **26 Lead Projects**, delivering on average, 45 Us Girls sessions per week
- **44% of the girls** participating are 13-15 years old, who are predominantly inactive or semi-active and are those that “don’t like PE”
- **70% of the projects** have confirmed that they will be continuing to use the Us Girls brand and have written or are planning to write a Mainstreaming plan for their Us Girls activity within their wider organisational plans
- **35% of projects** have confirmed that they are looking not just to sustain activity but to continue to actively grow Us Girls provision
- **46% of projects** are currently exploring new partnerships and/or actively seeking alternative funding to continue Us Girls provision

The Future

Having consulted with the Us Girls projects about what support they need from StreetGames to sustain the activities that are going well, along with the current work we have been doing around the mainstreaming and embedding of projects, we have identified a minimal level of support we feel is needed to give a fair number of the projects a chance of continuing. Some projects have identified reasonable sustainability plans, but we cannot guarantee similar levels of activity for disadvantaged females without the projects receiving more direct support linked to mainstreaming and embedding. Local projects also need support to explore funding options/opportunities to cover on-going Us Girls activity costs such as coaching costs, facility hire and equipment. The network have told us the following support they require to continue to mainstream Us Girls activity in the next 12 months;

- **58% of the Projects** wish to continue to receive support from the wider Us Girls / StreetGames network
- **42% of Projects** have confirmed they require continued support for Insight to drive their mainstreaming and embedding plans
- **31% of Projects** explicitly state they need support with Training and Volunteering to drive their Us Girls sustainability plans
- **35% of Projects** desire opportunities for engagement Us Girls events across Wales.



We will continue to deliver the principle of the Us Girls scheme, as it works in representing a different approach to engaging girls and young women who are inactive. The brand also works very well with schools. In terms of our delivery model, new and existing DSS clubs will be encouraged to embed Us Girls delivery as an offer. We are also looking at piloting Us Girls DSS Clubs, which will become independent constitutions for funding purposes in their own right”

- Matt Hilliker, Denbighshire

Examples of mainstreaming activities from a selection of projects can be seen in the Table below. Over the next 12 months of the mainstreaming and embedding approach of the Us Girls programme into Doorstep Sport across Wales, the mainstreaming journey will be developed and evaluated.

Project/Organisation	Mainstreaming aims	Embedded in Strategic Plan 2017>
Blaenau Gwent (Aneurin Leisure)	Us Girls brand and delivery tool will be used for future engagement with 'hard to reach' females. Volunteer-led sessions will continue. Further co-ordination will go into extending work to focus more specifically on wellbeing, mental health and an overall holistic approach. The project have applied for further funding (Fawcett Society/Tampon Tax Fund) to create a project that enhances the participant journey from inactive to regular participation. The project will be adopting 'Us Girls' Coffee Morning/partnership meetings to link with specialised mental health organisations locally, they would also like to explore ideas to engage in an annual sponsored participant event to bring money into their local projects.	Yes
Caerphilly (Communities First)	The new 'Let's Go Girls' Campaign in Caerphilly targets the semi-active and active, which means that Us Girls brand and delivery style to engage with inactive women and girls will form an effective part of this as a 'good fit'. The sustainability of the Big Sister volunteer programme will assist retention of sessions and participation, whilst engaging in fun and creative fundraising opportunities. Recent examples include sponsored walks and the Tesco bag fund.	Yes
Caerphilly (Creazione)	Us Girls brand and delivery tool will be used for future engagement with semi-active women and girls. 4 of the 16 Us Girls Clubs in Caerphilly will be sustained, providing regular varied and vibrant offers. The clubs will be run by a team of 6 strong Big Sister Leaders, who will continue to engage in training, up-skilling and fundraising activities as part of the programme. Each of the 4 clubs will become a constitution, so that they become self-funded ventures in the future.	Yes
Denbighshire (DCC & Communities First)	Us Girls brand and delivery tool will be used for future engagement with inactive women and girls (as a different, non-traditional approach is required), with a view to extend the target age group to attract a wider audience and intergenerational activity. Existing Doorstep Sport Clubs will be encouraged/ supported to embed Us Girls as an additional offer, and one Us Girls Doorstep Sport Club will be piloted in 2017, which will be an independent constitution.	Yes
Merthyr (MBC & Communities First)	The project are currently in the process of writing their future sustainability plans for community sport delivery. In order to continue to engage hard to reach, inactive women and girls, the Us Girls programme and future use of branding will be written into their plans to supplement the Merthyr-wide women and girls campaign to get more females active.	In progress
Neath Port Talbot (Sports Development)	Us Girls brand and delivery tool/style will used for future engagement with inactive women and girls aged 13+. The project have already started to apply a flexible, low cost pricing structure, which will assist in sustaining session delivery in the future. 4 well-attended sessions will be sustained out of the current 8 active sessions; this will help to manage resources and quality of delivery more effectively.	Yes

Project/Organisation	Mainstreaming aims	Embedded in Strategic Plan 2017>
Newport (Newport Live)	Us Girls brand and delivery tool will be used for sustained engagement with hard to reach women and girls, as an alternative offer to traditional sport delivery. The project have learned that the approach through Us Girls delivery works, they have also expanded and embedded this learning in their more recent plans to reach female refugees and asylum seekers. Throughout the programme the project has placed a strong emphasis on the development of their volunteering programme – The Gossip Girls. All of their Us Girls volunteers have received support, advice and training to develop their skills, ability and appetite to deliver sessions now and in the future. The volunteers are due to undertake Pink Belt Training which will be another future offer to add to the existing programme.	Yes
Pembrokeshire (Communities First)	Us Girls branding and delivery will continue to be utilised as a tool that aims to address the barriers to sport faced by girls and young women living in Pembrokeshire. In 2017 leadership of the project will move from Communities First to Sport Development, which will sustain delivery for the future. Sport Development are already working with Communities First as a delivery partner, so have a strong understanding of the offers and approaches that are working in the area. Women and Girls’ participation in sport is a priority area for the department; therefore they will be embedding Us Girls delivery into future planning to widen the scope of their work to get more female participants engaged in physical activity.	Yes
Valleys Gymnastics Academy	Valleys Gymnastics Academy will continue to utilise the Us Girls’ brand and style of delivery to attract girls and young women that wouldn’t normally attend a traditional gymnastics session. Us Girls will be added to strategic planning as another strand of delivery. As part of their sustainability plan, VGA have more recently placed a strong focus on up-skilling volunteers to continue good quality session delivery in the right style. VGA will continue to offer accredited coaching qualifications to Us Girls volunteers and potentially open this up to the StreetGames Network.	Yes

As part of the mainstreaming and embedding approach to the Us Girls programme over the next 12 months (2017-2018) StreetGames has committed to work with 33 Us Girls projects to maintain engagement in delivery to girls living in poverty. In order to do this, work collaboratively with local and national organisations to support the wider doorstep sport network to do this. As part of this journey StreetGames will continue to develop the learning and insight from the frontline provision, including participant, volunteer and project journey as well as organisational and cultural change that may occur in order to support this on-going movement. A summary of the StreetGames plan for the Us Girls programme for the next 12 months can be seen here.

StreetGames' Objectives...	To continue to promote Us Girls methodology as a recognised tool to engage inactive females from disadvantaged areas, as part of the Doorstep Sport infrastructure
StreetGames' role in addressing this challenge	<p>To mainstream embed the Us Girls methodology and ethos into bespoke Doorstep Sport planning of local, regional and national organisations.</p> <p>Support the Doorstep Sport Network to deliver to women and girls living in poverty, through sharing best practice and insight nationally and locally (DSA, Hubs)</p> <p>Continue to educating the StreetGames network, to successfully engage with inactive women & girls through our Training Academy offer. Unlock more local resource for existing Us Girls projects.</p>
What StreetGames will measure	<p>33 x Us Girls Projects to maintain engagement in delivery to girls, living in poverty. All with plans to engage with young females, living in poverty.</p> <p>3 x Us Girls Project Case Studies, around localised insight-led approaches.</p> <p>4 x Local Us Girls Coffee Morning/network meetings</p> <p>4 x Us Girls training workshops</p>
Output 2017/18	<p>Organisations (local, regional and national) with a meaningful commitment to engage with and deliver to young females, living in poverty through sport/physical activity.</p> <p>Greater insight, knowledge and good practice models to share across the wider sector, via the collation and collection of project data and short, mid and longer term case studies, with reference to the elements of engagement and theory of change model.</p> <p>More investment into local organisations, to deliver sport/physical activity to young females living in poverty.</p>
Outcome	<p>An increase in sport/physical activity participation for young females, living in poverty.</p> <p>A decrease of young females, living in poverty, who are inactive.</p>
Links to Sport Wales Outcomes	<p>Tackling Inequalities – ensuring that young females, living in poverty are reaping the benefits of sport/physical activity, and that the gender gap in this area is narrowed</p> <p>Pathway – ensuring that young females, living in poverty, have the opportunity to engage with the sporting pathway but also have their sporting destination (Doorstep Sport Clubs) recognised on the pathway</p> <p>Hooked on Sport – Closing the sporting gap between young females living in poverty and their more affluent female peers.</p> <p>Sport Wales' Child Poverty Strategy 2012-2015 – Poverty, a core element of agency plans and raising the profile of the impact sport can make on young females living in poverty.</p>
Links to Sector Policy	<p>Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Welsh Government</p> <p>Child Poverty Strategy, Welsh Government, March 2015</p> <p>Creating a Healthier, Happier and Fairer Wales, Public Health Wales Strategic Plan, 2015-2018</p>

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