

YST

GIRLS ACTIVE

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



Welcome To Girls Active

This introductory guide supports teachers to initiate Girls Active in their schools. It accompanies the Girls Active core teacher-training.

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"They [the Girls Active leaders] are an inspiration to me now... they give me a reason to carry on this job and what I'm doing. They've inspired a whole generation of people from this school to carry on being active for the rest of their lives."

PE teacher, Fowey River

"Being leaders and supporting the younger girls has really boosted their self-esteem and confidence."

One of the girls was recently awarded 'overall leader of the year' at the school's sports awards."

PE teacher, Castleford

Introductory Guide For Teachers

Introduction

Girls Active supports schools to understand what motivates girls to take part in physical activity. It enables teachers to work with the girls - through consultation and leadership - to make the necessary changes to their physical education (PE), sport and physical activity provision. Developed by the Youth Sport Trust, and delivered in partnership with Women in Sport and This Girl Can, Girls Active is funded by Sport England.

Following a successful two-year research and pilot study, Girls Active started in 2015. Since then, over 200 schools and 50,000 girls have taken part. Their practice supports the ongoing development of the Girls Active resources and training.

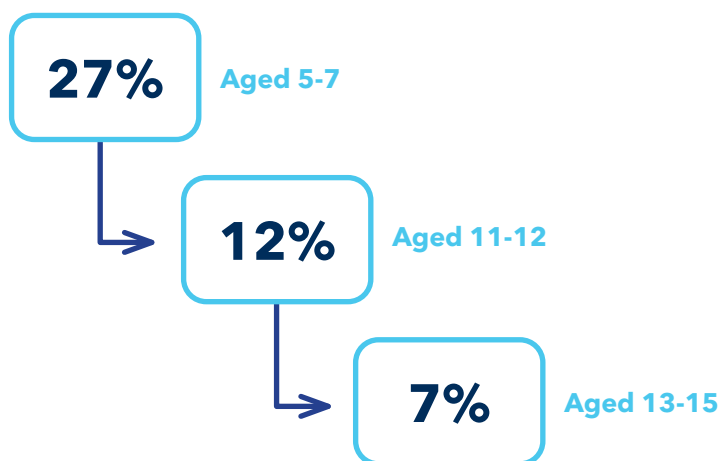
Why Is Girls Active Needed?

Challenges

The Chief Medical Officers¹ recommend that all children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for **at least 60 minutes** and up to several hours **every day**.

Research² shows that by age 7 girls are already less active than boys and this disparity widens as they move from childhood into adolescence. Secondary-age girls are more likely to experience barriers to participation than boys³. The biggest drop-off occurs during the transition from primary to secondary school, with disruption to friendship groups and declining body confidence affecting girls' participation in PE and sport⁴.

Girls who are **meeting** the physical activity requirement:



"It is amazing and it's made me feel fitter and feel good about myself as I've been more active than I was before. The best bit is it's very enjoyable and fun!"

Post-16 girl, Slated Row

Girls Active supports schools to increase girls' engagement in physical activity.

¹ Department of Health (2011) Start Active, Stay Active

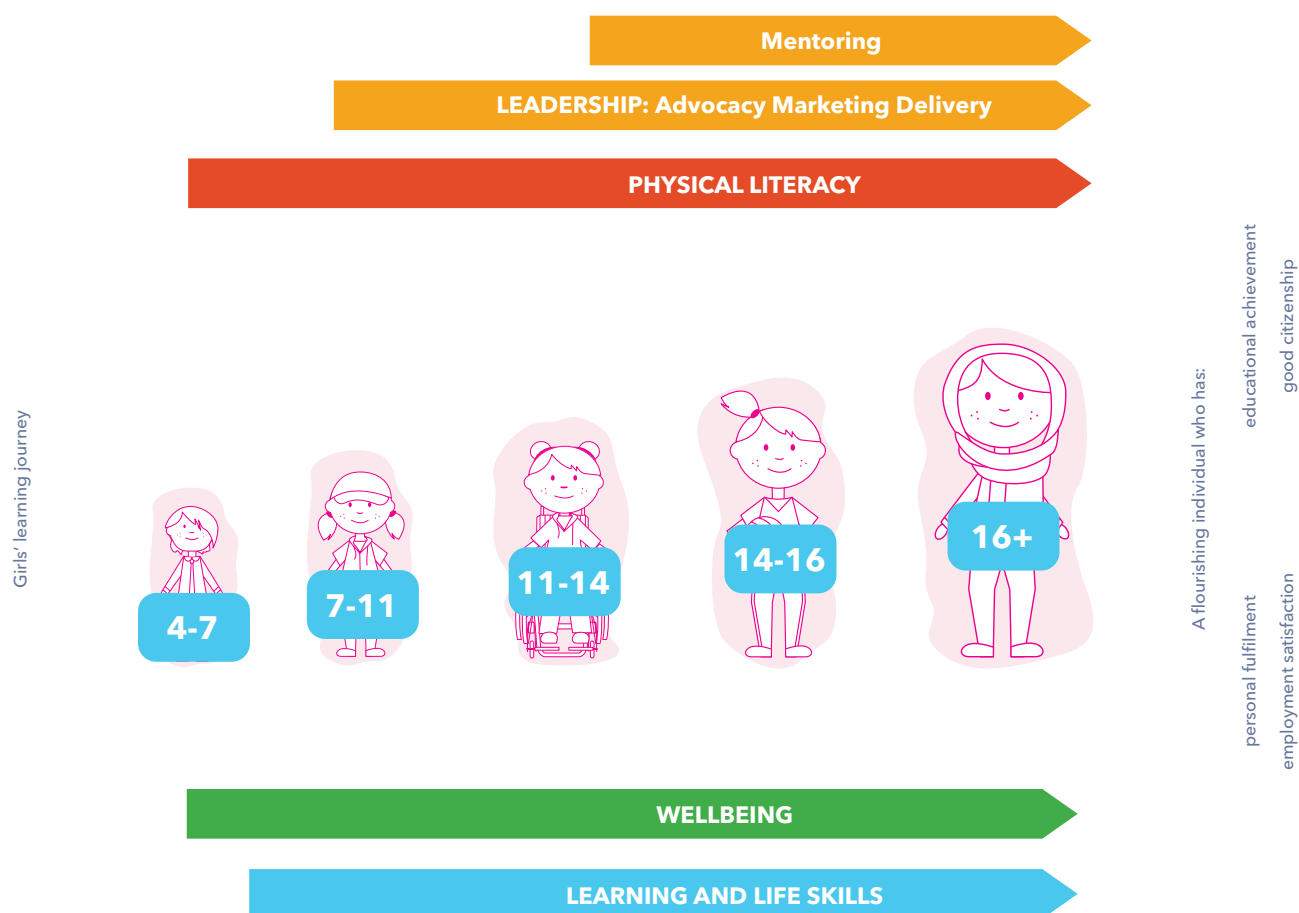
² NHS (2015) Health Survey for England

³ Women in Sport (2017) Girls and Boys in School Sport: Girls Active Report

⁴ Girl Guiding UK (2016) Girls' Attitudes Survey

Opportunities

A wealth of evidence⁵ exists to show the benefits of PE, sport and physical activity to girls - not just to their physical health but to their wider wellbeing and achievement. This image summarises girls' potential learning through Girls Active, leading to them flourishing in school, work and life.



Impact

Based on programme impact, Girls Active will help schools to have the following impact:

Improve girls' attitudes to PE and school sport

The number of girls who look forward to their PE lessons has nearly doubled



38%

71%

#GirlsActive



The percentage of girls who 'look forward' to extracurricular sport has risen



36%

66%

#GirlsActive



Increase girls' confidence and self-esteem

73% 'like the way they feel' after physical activity compared with 41% previously



41%

73%

#GirlsActive



Girls who are happy with the way their body looks more than doubled



25%

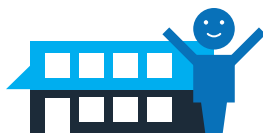
56%

#GirlsActive



Increase girls' engagement in school generally

The percentage of girls that felt positive about school rose more than threefold



24%

78%

#GirlsActive



⁵ See the Girls Active Advocacy Tool for Teachers

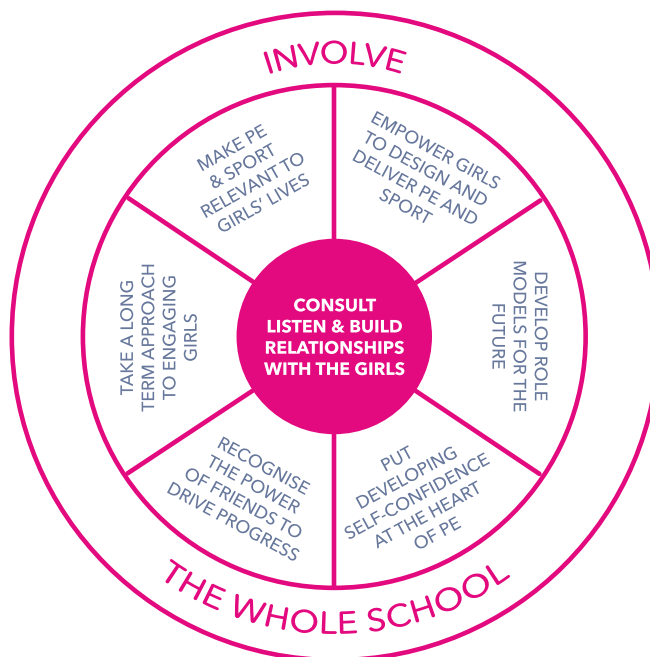
"We are very much committed to the development of our students' life skills and all round character. The Girls Active innovation project addressed both of these aspects, developing a key skill in all of the students involved and the character of the older girls who led the activity. It has definitely shown that these girls can!"

Head Teacher, Kingsbury

How Does Girls Active Make A Difference?

Principles

There are six key principles that underpin effective practice in engaging girls in PE, sport and physical activity. These have positive relationships at their core and should be supported by whole school policies and practice.



Top tips for engaging girls

Take a **long-term approach** to engaging girls

- Make girls' engagement an explicit objective in PE plans
- Involve all PE staff in addressing the issues

Put developing **self-confidence** at the heart of PE

- Support girls to identify and set personal goals
- Focus on mastery and personal improvement

Make PE and sport **relevant** to girls' lives

- Focus on girls being active for life not just for sport
- Make explicit the development of girls' wider life skills

Recognise the **power of friends** to drive progress

- Provide and promote the social aspects of PE and sport
- Enable girls to motivate their peers to take part

Develop **role models** for the future

- Deploy girls as positive role models for other girls
- Promote diverse role models, not just elite sportswomen

Empower girls to design and deliver PE and sport

- Allow girls to be creative and learn through discovery
- Develop and deploy girls in a variety of leadership roles

Examples Of The Six Principles In Practice

Take a long-term approach to engaging girls

Castleford Academy uses a coach to run an after-school gymnastics club for girls. The 3-4pm slot is for secondary-age girls and 4-5pm is for Year 5/6 girls from local primary schools. Older girls stay on to work with the younger ones while the PE teacher spends time with the primary girls and their parents to build long-term relationships.

The Heathland School recognised dads as being key influencers for their Asian girls' participation. To raise the dads' awareness of the value of physical activity, and to gain parental support for PE and school sport, it worked with the girls to run a Dads and Daughters event that focused on the benefits of healthy active lifestyles - including their link to achievement.

Put developing self-confidence at the heart of PE

Haughton Academy targeted Year 9 Pupil Premium girls who were lower achievers, both in PE and academically. Teachers changed how they gave feedback, praising the positive aspects of the girls' behaviour and performance instead of focusing on the negatives, e.g. celebrating when the girls bring kit, even if it isn't the right PE kit. Relationships have improved as a result.

With support from local partners, **St Breock Primary School** ran a mixed-school event for Year 5/6 girls. By using off-site, non-traditional and problem-solving activities, it supported the girls to explore, take risks and overcome their fears of doing new things. It wanted to pre-empt drop-off by building the girls' confidence, resilience and positive mind-sets.

Make PE and sport relevant to girls' lives

Once a week, **Wellington Primary School** takes its girls to the local park for lunchtime activities. Many of the girls didn't visit the park with their parents so it shows them how and where they can take part outside of school - for free! The girls discuss what physical activity means and play tag and hop scotch as well as enjoy the swings and climbing frames. The girls love it!

Year 9/10 girls at **Al Sadiq and Al Zahra School** took part in leadership and life skills sessions with Cath Bishop, a former Olympic rower and diplomat. The girls had to design a multi-activity event for younger pupils before pitching their ideas to a judging panel to secure resources. Other school staff recognised the impact on the girls' learning and work skills.



Recognise the power of friends to drive progress

Girls with special educational needs (SEND) at [Accrington Academy](#) tended not to take part in the Girls Active club. The school enlisted four Year 8 girls with SEND to plan a bespoke event: a swimming gala. The girls acted as team captains and recruited and motivated their own teams of swimmers, resulting in 25 students with SEND participating in the gala on the day.

[King Alfred's Academy](#) has five girls' leadership groups, each focusing on a specific area. The 'Be there for you' leaders support other girls to get involved in PE and sport on a day-to-day basis. Each of the leaders has a target to get five girls who don't currently participate active by the end of the school year. The leaders also have 200 Twitter followers!

Develop role models for the future

Girls at [Mortimer Community College](#) interviewed female members of staff across the school about their involvement in physical activity: what they do, why they do it, a photo and some inspirational words. Using a template they had designed, the girls created an inspiration wall of positive female role models to reinforce the message that being active is 'normal'.

At [Cirencester Kingshill School](#), the six Year 9 Girls Active leaders worked with two friends each to run a festival for girls from ten local primary schools. The event took place on the secondary school site and included skipping, kick-ball-rounders and Zumba. These leaders will run extra-curricular clubs for the younger girls when they join the school in Year 7.

Empower girls to design and deliver PE and sport

As so many girls applied to join the [Northfield School](#) Girls Active team, the lead teacher supported them to organise a Race for Life for the whole school so that all of the girls could have a leadership role. The girls did everything including planning the event, designing the publicity, signing up teams, acting as stewards, awarding prizes and reporting on it afterwards.

Seven girls were recruited as Girls Active leaders at [Slated Row School](#), which is a special school. These girls surveyed the preferences of the other girls in school and designed a programme of girls-only Wednesday lunchtime sessions. The girls have complete responsibility for the programme, from designing posters to sending runners to rally girls to attend.

"When my daughter left primary school, she would say that PE was her least favourite lesson. During your This Girl Can week she tried and enjoyed lots of different activities. Today she returned home wanting to join your judo club."

Parent, King Edward VI



Consultation

Positive relationships are at the heart of Girls Active and these are nurtured by staff consulting, listening to and responding to girls. The process of consultation – showing girls they are valued – is as, if not more, important than the changes you make as a result. Consultation is an ongoing process – not a one-off event. Its aim is to help not to judge you!

Consultation may be **informal**, for example, talking to girls as they get changed for PE or **structured**, for example, facilitating group discussions during lessons.

Top tips for consulting girls

Consultation is most effective when you:

- have a **clear purpose** and girls know how it will be used
- are **approachable**, have **empathy** and have excellent **active listening** skills
- meet where girls feel **comfortable**, **safe** and free to express their views
- give it time so you can **check what you hear**
- are aware of **peer-pressure** and allow girls to talk in groups or individually
- treat girls' responses **confidentially**, i.e. use their views not their names
- make sure girls are **fully informed** before discussing options and making choices
- **negotiate** and **compromise** – you might need to give and take when agreeing actions
- use the responses to produce **recommendations** and agree **actions**
- put your promises into **action**
- **report back** to girls on your progress or to share any problems
- **continue** to seek and listen to girls' feelings, views and ideas.

Consultation methods include:

- online surveys or paper questionnaires
- individual or small-group interviews
- focus groups, with targeted girls or themes
- a forum or open discussion in a large group
- informal conversations, with individuals or small groups
- drop-in sessions, where girls can come to you at certain times
- suggestion box, ideas graffiti wall, online posts, stickers, film booth etc.
- feedback and review tools, e.g. scoring or ranking activities and ideas.

Methods can be combined. For example, a survey will highlight general trends for all girls. Follow up with a focus group to explore an issue in greater depth with some girls.

Examples of consulting girls

At [West Lea School](#) (a special school) the girls meet fortnightly with the PE teaching assistant (TA) during lunchtime. With encouragement and support from the TA, the girls share how they feel about PE and school sport – their likes and dislikes – and identify activities they would like to try. The girls also discuss non-sport role models, such as celebrities or their female relatives, and explore how these role models' stories motivate them to keep going when they face personal challenges.

One of the PE teachers at [Nicholas Chamberlaine School](#) meets with the 12 Girls Active leaders every Wednesday lunchtime to discuss the girls' concerns and barriers regarding PE and sport. In turn, the leaders (who are in Year 8) consult with other girls in Years 7 and 8 to make sure their views are representative of different groups of girls.

The PE teacher at [Grangemouth High School](#) worked with disengaged girls to create a contract for PE lessons. The girls were encouraged to share and agree their expectations of the teacher and each other while the teacher contributed her own expectations. Once they had agreed the details, all of the girls and the teacher signed the contract. A copy was posted in the PE corridor and each of the girls received an individual copy to take home. This helped both parties to air their concerns and to build positive relationships.

At [King Alfred's Academy](#), a large split-site school with over 2,000 students, the head of Key Stage 4 enlisted the help of the Girls Active leaders to consult with other girls. The leaders spent a day talking to other girls around the school about sport and encouraging them to complete the online Girls Active survey. They also promoted the process through assemblies. The leaders analysed the findings alongside the teachers and devised a plan to tackle the issues the other girls had raised.

The principal teacher for PE at [Drumchapel High School](#) leads a 'You said; we did' consultation with all students on a regular basis. Using consistent questions, each of the PE teachers facilitates a review during PE lessons, with small groups of students recording their responses on flipcharts. Students collate and analyse these in maths. Results are posted on the PE notice board and are followed by updates from the department on actions and progress.

The Learning Mentor at [Clare Mount School](#) (a special school) supported the school's trainee PE teachers to establish a lunchtime session for targeted girls. They meet twice a week to give the girls the time and space to talk about PE, sport and physical activity. This involves gaining the trust of the girls so they feel confident and comfortable to share their likes, dislikes, barriers and interests. The sessions are optional and very informal; they are held in the school's café – the Bungalow – over a cup of tea.



What Does Girls Active Involve?

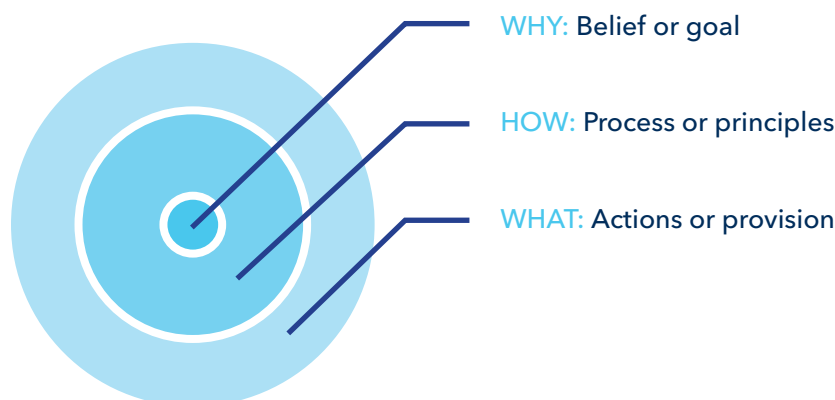
To be fully effective and sustainable over time, Girls Active depends on three elements:

- advocacy – with other PE colleagues, the whole school and parents
- planning – including a self-review, action plan and evaluation – on an annual basis
- empowering girls – to take responsibility for their own and other girls' engagement.

Advocacy

Both teachers and girls need to be advocates for girls' PE, sport and physical activity to convince others of the importance of being physically active to girls' lives, and to persuade them to change their provision so it is more engaging for girls. It is not enough to do the work yourself: other people need to know about it – and its impact – if they are to understand, provide support or resources, and change their own policies and practice.

Girls Active adopts the **Golden Circle** approach to advocacy⁶. This suggests that the most inspiring and influential people or organisations, such as Dr Martin Luther King Junior (socio-political) or Apple (commercial), are those that start with the inner ring and work outwards when communicating with the people they wish to affect.



For example, use the Golden Circle to advocate physical activity to different types of girls:

	Why?	Have fun, be with friends, get a bit fitter Promote as: Fun, Friends and Fitness!	Challenge self, try new stuff, individual Promote as: Dare to be different!
	How?	Informal, variety of activities, choice, social time, drop-in and out, music	High challenge, solo endeavour, non-traditional activities, perceived risk
	What?	Lunchtime girls-only drop-in session offering rolling 10-minute tasters	After-school parkour session run off-site by external instructors

⁶ Simon Sinek: https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en

Your advocacy message depends on the audience. This might include:

- the girls
- PE colleagues
- senior leaders
- other school staff
- governors
- parents
- partner schools
- community partners

Think about their goals and priorities and match your 'why' to suit. For example:

Head of PE

Less time wasted on kit issues leads to more learning time for all pupils in PE.

Head of Year

Improved relationships between girls reduces incidences of bullying.

Head of English

Being responsible for marketing improves girls' speaking and writing skills.

Parent

Girls with greater confidence and self-esteem are less anxious about life.

16 year old girl

Being creative in PE develops employability skills such as problem-solving.

11 year old girl

Meeting other girls through sport breaks the ice for starting secondary school.

Consider the **Rule of Three**. This is a presentation technique based on the idea that people tend to remember three things. By saying something three times or using alliteration with three words, your presentation can be more effective. Famous examples include:

- "Just do it!" Nike
- "Our priorities are education, education, education." Tony Blair
- "Friendship. Respect. Excellence." The Olympic Values

Some Girls Active schools adopt the Sport England campaign strapline: **This Girl Can**.

Top tips for advocacy

Advocacy is most effective when you:

- identify the **challenge** - find out what the issues are for the girls in your school
- know the **facts** - have evidence for where you are now⁷
- share a **vision** - show what change could look like in your school
- identify key **influencers**/decision-makers - harness potential allies, including the girls
- recognise others' **priorities** - match your 'why' to their goals
- use a respectful and **assertive** communication style - believe in yourself
- **plan** your campaign - but take advantage of spontaneous opportunities too
- be **persistent** - long-term change needs long-term advocacy.

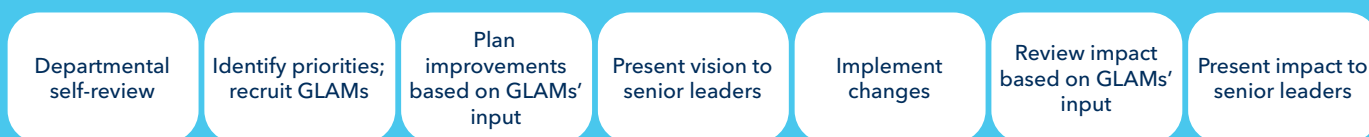
Remember: the Girls Active leaders will support you to advocate to others.

Planning

Girls Active should be embedded in PE planning if it is to be fully effective and sustainable. As far as possible, responsibilities should be shared across the team rather than 'girls' being the sole responsibility of one teacher. Similarly, PE priorities and plans should be integral to and influence the whole school improvement plan.

There are two strands to planning for Girls Active; these should be interlinked so that input from the girls helps to shape subject and whole school plans. The process is cyclical, with the findings from year one shaping the planning for year two and so on.

Planning with colleagues



Planning with the girls



Start with a [self-review](#). A self-review template has been provided as part of Girls Active. This reflects the six Girls Active principles. You may wish to use this as a stand-alone review initially but build the key elements into your subject self-review over time. This self-review should be used alongside feedback from the girls to highlight your development priorities.

Use these priorities to draft an initial [action plan](#), including the girls' ideas. Consider:



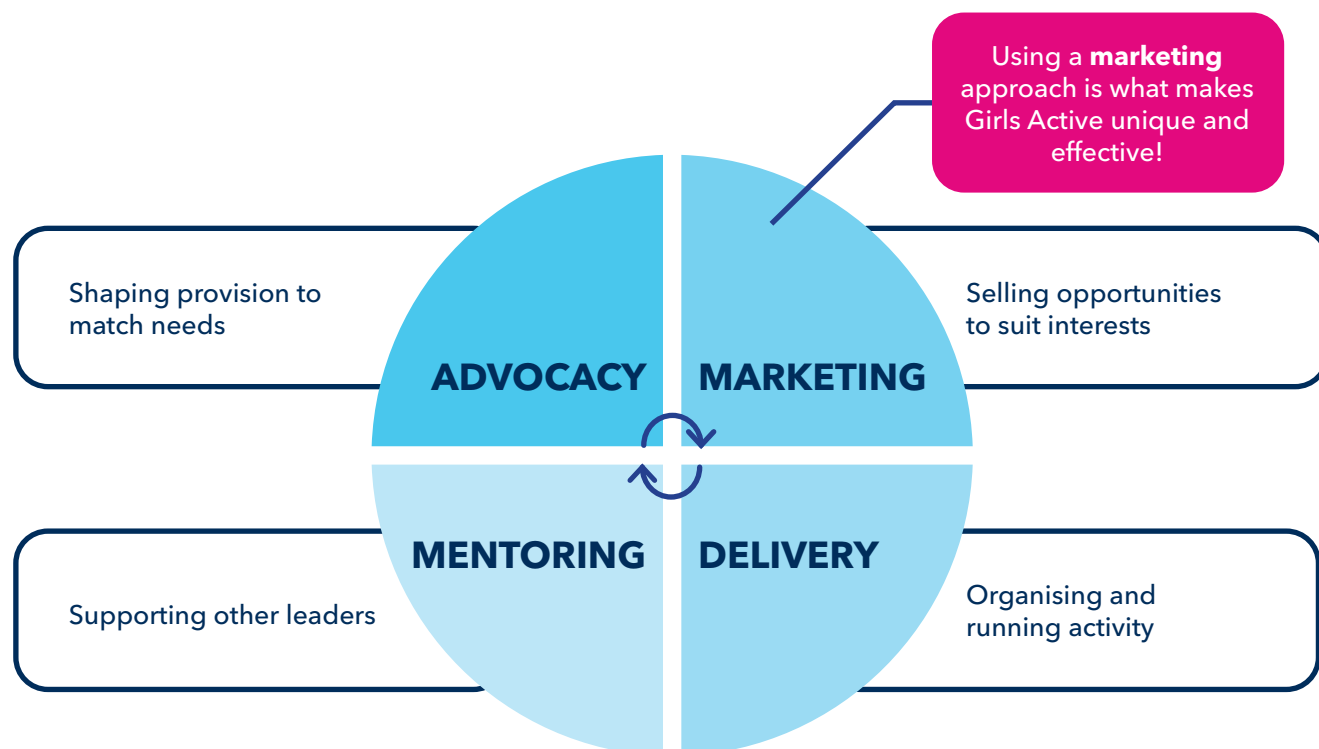
At the end of each implementation period, involve the Girls Active leaders in reviewing and [evaluating](#) the work. Use the findings to support your – and the girls' – advocacy process.

Remember: the Girls Active leaders' input will inform your planning and reviewing.

Empowering Girls

Enabling the girls to drive their own and other girls' engagement is crucial to success: girls need to have ownership of their PE, sport and physical activity. Recruiting and preparing girls to take on a wide range of leadership roles also provides you with a workforce. You will need to support them initially, but you do not have to do everything for them!

Girls may take on a variety of roles as part of a Girls' Leadership and Marketing Squad (GLAMs). These include:



Make sure Girls Active leaders reflect and represent a variety of girls, including those from targeted groups or with additional or specific needs.

Top tips for recruiting Girls Active leaders

- Promote Girls Active in assemblies
- Set eligibility criteria, e.g. age, skills
- Invest early, e.g. invite younger girls
- Seek applications – ask for creativity
- Encourage targeted individuals
- Use other staff to encourage girls
- Appoint girls with different skills
- Have a mix of confidence levels
- Buddy by friends or experienced girls
- Make it a privilege to be involved

Top tips for supporting Girls Active leaders

- Be adaptable and open-minded
- Start with a 'quick win'
- Establish a code of conduct/contract
- Agree clear roles and responsibilities
- Recognise girls' other commitments
- Allow girls to meet independently
- Use girls' preferred communications
- Adopt a trial and improvement ethos
- Ask other staff to provide support
- Trust the girls and let go!

Remember: the Girls Active leaders will lead the marketing of girls' physical activity.

Examples of recruiting and supporting girls

Mortimer Community College launched Girls Active with an assembly on the negative stereotypes of girls in sport. It played the 'Like a Girl' video and led a discussion on its mission to change the negative attitudes of students and staff. Girls were asked to nominate two members from each year group to become leaders. The criteria were for them to have leadership and creative thinking skills.

The girls with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from **Marjorie McClure School** were buddied with girls from Coopers, the mainstream school with which the special school shares its site. This supported the girls with SEND to take a first step into leadership. They also took on specific roles that played to their personal strengths.

At **Werneth School**, 20 girls from Year 10 were invited to attend a fun taster session to find out about Girls Active. The school deliberately selected more girls than it needed to allow for subsequent drop-off. There is a real mix of girls: those who always liked sport, those who are popular with other girls in school, and academically bright girls who are creative. This model has now been introduced for girls in Year 7.

The Girls Active leaders originally hand-picked by PE staff at **St Thomas More RC Academy** did not work well together. The following year, the school asked girls in Years 8 and 9 to apply and, from the 25 applicants, appointed 12. The girls are doing an excellent job, leading assemblies and form class discussions on their own. They are now recruiting and mentoring Year 7 girls to become the next cohort of leaders.

Each of the five Girls Active groups at **King Alfred's Academy** has a lead girl. The teacher meets with the five lead girls each week for an update and to discuss issues. The lead girls then meet with their respective groups after school every week. Each group has its own action plan and targets. The groups are also supported by a sixth form ambassador and a non-PE teacher ambassador.

The Girls Active squad at **King Edward VI School** comprises two Year 11 girls, who were already experienced leaders, and a representative girl from each of Years 7-10. They were invited by the female PE staff who teach them and were selected because of their potential to be the voice of their year group. The Year 9 representative is disabled and, as a champion of disability sport beyond school, is an inspirational role model for the whole school.

"The GLAMs have been amazing this year. They have embraced the role with a real sense of maturity and been a great support to [the PE teacher]. The event they produced was great; all who came had a great time."

Assistant Head, Flixton

"Our young leaders have greatly improved their confidence, got some inactive students active and, therefore, had a massive impact on the school community."

Deputy Head, Slated Row

Handout for staff

Girls Active supports schools to get more girls more active.

Share this page with others (teachers and support staff, senior leaders, governors, parents) to raise the profile of girls' participation and how Girls Active supports this.

Why?



At all ages, girls are **less active** than boys.

Girls have **lower** levels of **confidence and enjoyment** than boys.

Less-active girls have **poorer wellbeing** than more-active girls.



Being active helps girls to have:

- good **health and wellbeing** and personal fulfilment
- educational **achievement**
- **employment** satisfaction
- active **citizenship**.

How?



Six key principles underpin Girls Active:

- take a **long-term** approach to engaging girls
- put developing **self-confidence** at the heart of PE
- make PE and sport **relevant** to girls' lives
- recognise the power of **friends** to drive progress
- develop **role models** for the future
- **empower** girls to design and deliver PE and sport.

These have **positive relationships** with staff and other girls at their core.

What?



Girls Active leaders are **positive peer influencers**.

As part of a girls' leadership and marketing squad (GLAMs) they:

- **advocate** – champion girls' needs.
- **deliver** – organise and run activities.
- **market** – promote activity in ways that appeal to girls.
- **mentor** – support new and younger leaders.



Adopting a **marketing** approach is unique to Girls Active. Marketeers take on roles such as:

market researcher

media manager

designer

reporter

motivator

Notes





Where Will We Find More Support?

Girls Active core support for teachers

Download from the Girls Active Dropbox

Self-review template

Advocacy tool for teachers

Advocacy and consultation module notes for teachers - to deliver to girls (optional)

Girls Active core support for girls

Hard copy in the resource and for download from the Girls Active Dropbox

Leadership pack - advocacy

Leadership pack - consultation

Leadership pack - delivery

Leadership pack - marketing

The core teacher-training will signpost you to additional, optional support that will help your school to address its Girls Active priorities. These include short guides, case studies, further Girls Active modules, and other Youth Sport Trust programmes. The termly Girls Active newsletter will keep you updated or visit: www.youthsporttrust.org/girls-active

You can also access support and resources from the Girls Active partners:

Women in Sport

www.womeninsport.org

This Girl Can

www.thisgirlcan.co.uk

"When I had no confidence I couldn't do that but now I can run a group on my own."

Girls Active leader, Slated Row

"Feeling special and having a greater sense of responsibility has meant the Girls Active leaders are more positive around school generally."

PE teacher, Cirencester Kingshill

"It has made me confident to try things in other lessons back at school, not just in PE."

Year 6 girl, St Breock



GIRLS ACTIVE

To find out more about Girls Active visit:
www.youthsporttrust.org/girls-active

We'd love to hear from you about the progress and
impact of Girls Active so please send any feedback to:
girlsactive@youthsporttrust.org

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#girlsactive
#ThisGirlCan

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