



Engaging inactive women in later life

Recommendations

Women in Sport are a partner in Get Out Get Active (GOGA), funded by Spirit of 2012 www.getoutgetactive.co.uk through the programme we have identified key principals for success when engaging women in later life.

This document shares the key considerations and principles that organisations and individuals offering opportunities for women in later life to get active (referred to in this document as ‘providers’) should apply to achieve the best results.

These recommendations are based on research carried out in collaboration with GOGA Thanet. We used observations, depth interviews and focus groups with active and inactive women in Thanet over 55 years old.

Visit Women in Sport’s Research and Advice service for the full research and a video case study. www.womeninsport.org/research-and-advice

1. An opportunity to re-engage in exercise

The experience of 'getting older' or a particular health condition can trigger participation. Limitations imposed by certain conditions might mean women need to find a different way to exercise. This opportunity can be maximised by sport providers.

2. Vary the group size.

Being sociable is not always the norm for inactive women. Activities in smaller groups may appeal.

3. Utilise buddy schemes.

Schemes which use a peer or family members to encourage and support participation can engage women who lack social support networks.

4. Take advantage of the interest in quality family time.

Physical activities where different generations of a family can be active together can provide an enjoyable way of spending quality time together.

5. Provide as much information as possible.

This helps women to see if the activity is suitable for them. The information will help overcome anxiety about attendance and whether the activity will be suited to their ability.

6. Me, not my age or impairment.

Many women do not identify with being an older woman or disabled. Avoid marketing and advertising that focuses on this.



7. Tap into the desire to do more.

Frequently inactive women expressed a desire to do more but felt limited by their physical capabilities. Inclusive and accessible activities are more likely to appeal.

8. Goal setting.

Helping to set goals as part of the activity, with a pathway to achievement, could help offer a focus beyond the day to day challenge.

9. Get closer to where women are.

Particularly with regards to the location of sessions and to spread the word about the activities. Consider locations that seem relevant, this may include health centres, garden centres or bingo halls.

10. Engage women's values.

All women have a set of simultaneously held values that drive decision-making and prioritisation within their lives. There is an opportunity for providers to frame sport in a way that appeals to women's values.



“ No one pushes you, you just do what you're comfortable with. ”

Recommendations in action: GOGA Thanet

Our research found GOGA Thanet implement these recommendations in several different ways including:

- GOGA Thanet activities feel local to the participants and easy to access. Venues include The Ageless Thanet Feelgood Factory in a central location and on a local bus route. Church, community centre and school halls are also utilised.
- Participants report feeling immediately welcomed and put at ease. Instructors and other participants are very welcoming and accepting.
- Staff are sensitive to participants' needs, but not patronising. Sessions are open and accepting; all abilities are welcomed. Activities adapt to the participants; instructors provide support and reassurance
- Sessions align with the women's values, with Nurturing friends and family as the dominant value for many of the women. Some women attend sessions to support or accompany family members (often a husband). There are sessions that the couples can attend and be active together. Many sessions also include the opportunity to socialise afterwards over tea, coffee and biscuits.
- Outreach work in the community and word of mouth work well to reach inactive women. The Ageless Thanet's 50+ festival is utilised to work in partnership with a number of organisations and aims to promote a range of fun activities and experiences.
- GOGA Thanet introduced a Peer Support project to reach disengaged inactive people. Peer Support utilises a person's lived experience of overcoming barriers to support someone else who might be experiencing similar barriers.

“ There's always someone here to talk to. ”