



Make Space for Us

Insight report
July 2022

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Foreword

Parks and green spaces are among the greatest assets in any community. They can be a focal point for organised events that bring many people together at once, or an area where people can walk their dogs or bring their children to play. Most people would say that parks ought to be for everyone.

In July 2021, we first spoke with Make Space for Girls, a charity set up to campaign to make parks and public spaces more welcoming to teenage girls. They told us there was little research to understand if parks were truly inclusive spaces, and somewhere teenage girls felt they could visit and be active. According to the most recent Sport England Children and Young People Active Lives Survey girls enjoy sport and exercise far less than boys. This means it is therefore vital to understand what more can be done to increase activity levels among girls.

We commissioned Women in Sport as the external research partner and have worked with them over the last ten months to understand the use of three parks across South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire among teenage girls. This research has found that twice as many girls as boys feel unsafe exercising in their local park with many being worried about harassment and

anti-social behaviour. This report details the research that Women in Sport carried out in the three areas with teenage girls and boys and the data reflects the young people in those areas and their views. It also shares the insight and recommendations that they have pulled from the research. We would like to thank them for their time in doing this work.

Alongside Women in Sport and Make Space for Girls, we are calling for park providers to give teenage girls a voice and a choice by engaging them in shaping the parks and communities they live in. Parks need to be designed better; to create exciting, innovative and safe spaces to support more teenage girls to be active; to enable a life-long love of exercising outdoors and empower them to lead happy, healthy lives.

We'd like to thank the girls, community groups, schools and students who participated in this research and all

the organisations who contributed to this project through the immersion and innovation workshops. We would also like to thank Kirklees Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Sheffield City Council for their support with this research and hope that the findings are useful in the future development they are seeking to do in the local parks, which we will support in any way we can.

We are excited to see how this research is used to shape parks of the future because if we can make them more inclusive for teenage girls, we can make them more inclusive for everyone. Parks can play a greater role in improving the physical and mental health of the nation as they can inspire and encourage girls to be more active and experience the joy and freedom of being outdoors.

Executive summary

This research is an important first step to understanding how teenage girls feel about being active outdoors in their local parks and green spaces.

Girls use parks less and face many barriers to exercising. This comes from a lack of understanding of their needs in park design and the way society sees and treats them when they get there.

These stifle enjoyment and limits their right to enjoy the wealth of health and wellbeing benefits of being active in the great outdoors.

We have a great chance to engage more teenage girls in outdoor activity post-pandemic. Girls value the importance of being fit, active and outdoors more than ever for their mental health and wellbeing.

But we must design spaces through their eyes, and inspire and support them to discover the potential of their local parks.

This research provides key insights into their barriers and needs to drive change if we want to create more inclusive parks and green spaces, where every girl can experience the joy and freedom of outdoor exercise.

1 First and foremost, parks need to provide a **clean, cared for and attractive space** with at least basic facilities for girls to feel comfortable.

2 Promoting **physical and emotional safety** in parks is particularly important for girls as engaging in physical activity significantly increases their emotional vulnerability.

3 Developing spaces in which **harassment, scrutiny and judgement are minimised** will support more girls to feel comfortable when exercising in parks.

4 Equalising and promoting usage of specific **exercise spaces for girls** will create a more inclusive environment where both girls and boys feel they are welcome.

5 Actively promoting **purposeful activity and organised opportunities** for girls to exercise in parks, with more guidance on how space/equipment can be used is essential to encourage girls.

6 Creating more **playful, exciting and adventurous ways to get active**, and involving girls in shaping activities and designing spaces will increase relevance and appeal.

Research objectives

Understand if and how teenage girls use parks and green spaces for physical activity in the Yorkshire area, based on three parks in Sheffield, Rotherham and Kirklees.

- Identify the barriers and challenges teenage girls face to being physically active in parks and green spaces.
- Uncover untapped opportunities to encourage greater park and green space use, and ways to better engage teenage girls in physical activity in these spaces.
- Understand the need for youth voice and consultation on parks and green spaces.



Ellesmere Park,
Burngreave, Sheffield



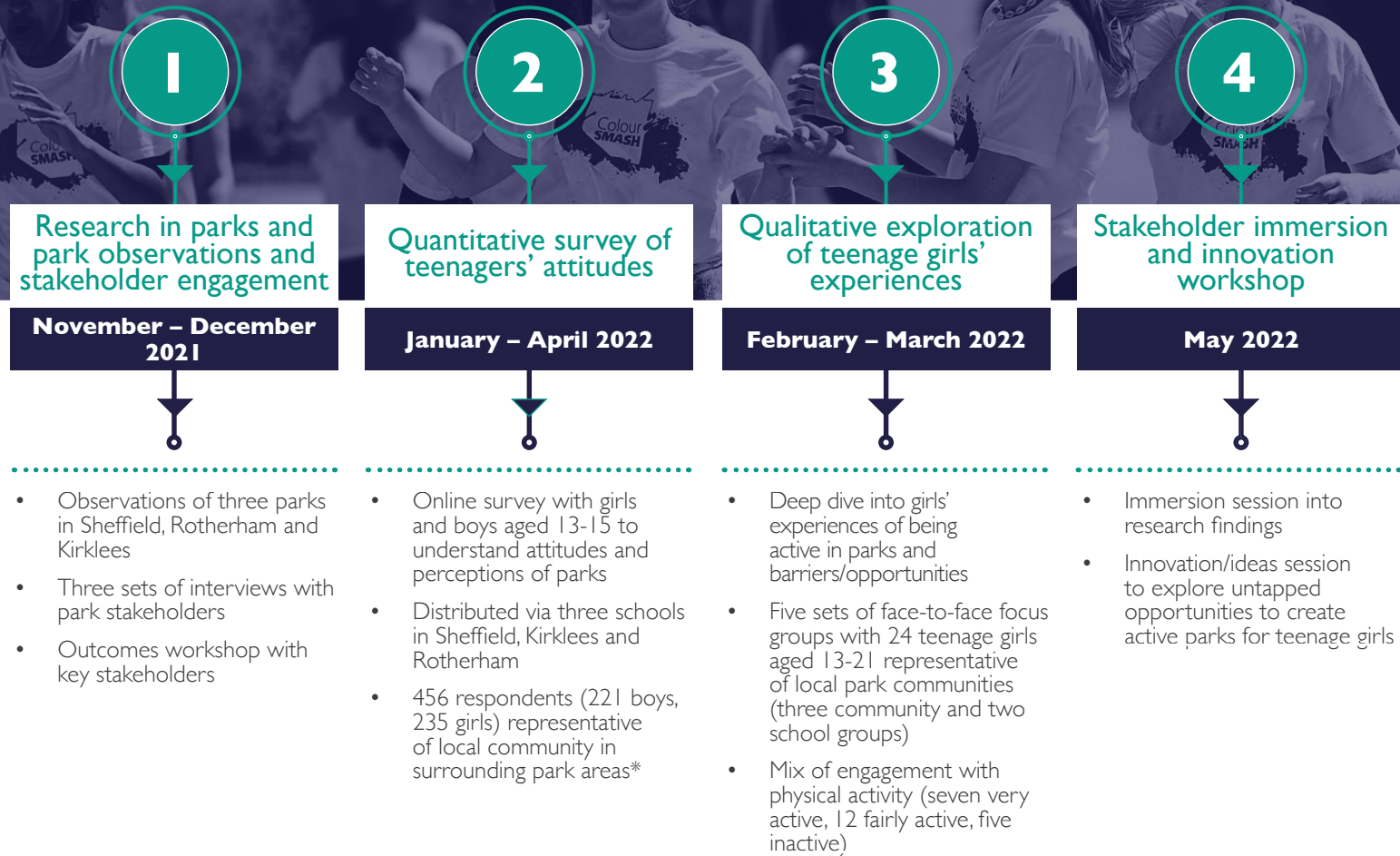
Greasbrough Park,
Greasbrough, Rotherham



Holroyd Park,
Ravensthorpe, Kirklees



Methodology

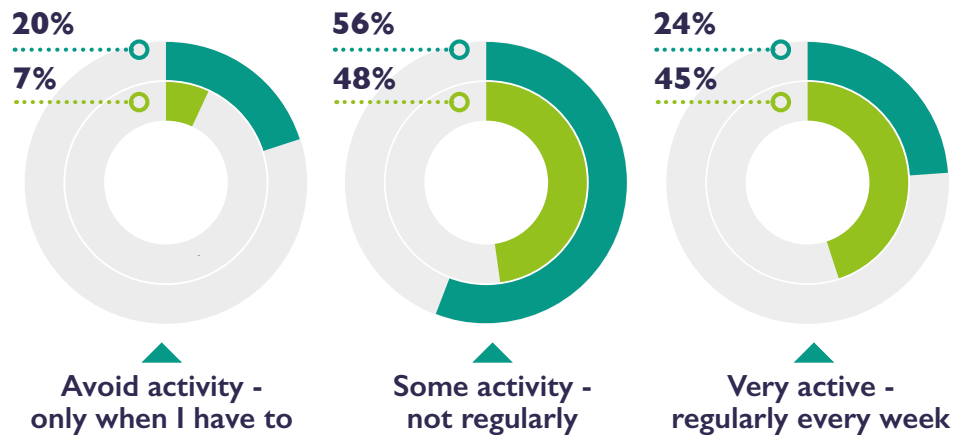


*All quantitative data is representative of this sample size and those who 'agreed/strongly agreed', unless otherwise stated. All qualitative data represents the voices of teenage girls.

The problem: Girls are not taking part in regular physical activity

In the park areas for this research, girls are less physically active than boys. Only two in ten girls are very active compared to four in ten boys and girls are twice as likely as boys to avoid physical activity.

Activity Levels



“ I just hate it...I’ve never really gone into sports. I like watching and stuff but like, never doing it. ”

When we compare their activity levels to girls nationally*:

Only **2** in **10** girls are **‘very active’**, compared to **3** in **10** girls nationally.

2 in **10** girls **avoid activity**, compared to **1** in **10** girls nationally.

“ I used to play football with boys... that’s why I dropped out. It was good then when I was younger. ”

*Source: Nationally representative survey data - Women in Sport (2022) Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls: Tackling Teenage Disengagement

The opportunity: 7 in 10 girls want to be more active

Only **3 in 10** girls say they are **‘sporty’** compared to over **5 in 10** boys.



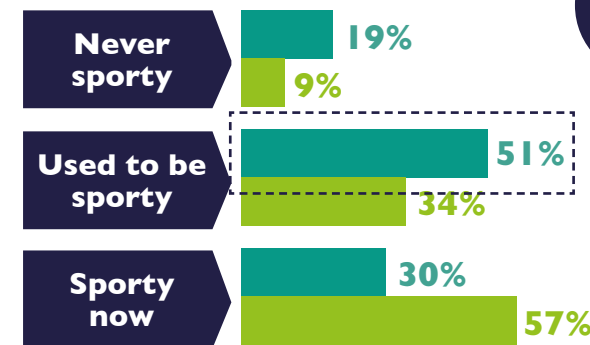
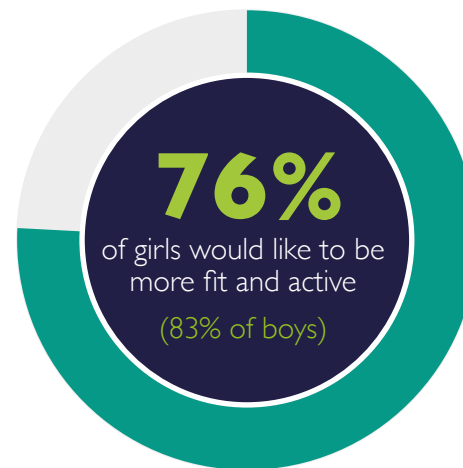
Our opportunity

5 in 10 girls say they **‘used to be sporty’** compared to **3 in 10** boys.



Girls are much more likely to stop feeling sporty after primary school than boys and this influences how active they are. We have a significant opportunity to re-engage these girls, as they have positive experiences of, and attitudes towards sport and exercise, which we can leverage to encourage them back into activity.

“ I used to do volleyball, dodge ball and netball in primary. I lost all my confidence... I just don’t like going in front of those people anymore. ”



Opportunity to engage in more physical activity





**Park usage,
attitudes and perceptions**

Parks are popular spaces for girls and boys, but girls use them less regularly

For girls, parks/green spaces ranked second in the places they frequent in their spare time. 48% of girls use them regularly compared to 63% of boys.

Girls are often encouraged not to venture too far from home by family.
A lack of other fun, teenage friendly activities and spaces in the local area makes parks a free, accessible choice for many girls.

Boys are almost twice as likely as girls to spend time in more formal sport and exercise settings such as sports clubs, leisure centres and gyms.



Where do teenagers spend their spare time? (most days/weekly)

	Girls	Boys
Shops/shopping centres	61%	50%
Parks/green space	48%	63%
Friends' houses	43%	41%
Restaurants/cafés	34%	33%
Sports club	17%	35%
Gym/leisure centre/pool	16%	30%
Cinema	10%	8%
Youth club	4%	15%



We just walk around the area...you just go together with your friends and walk around. ”



The park is not known for being fun...nothing for teenagers. ”



Local is better. Walking about 20 minutes is fine to me, but not to a different area. ”



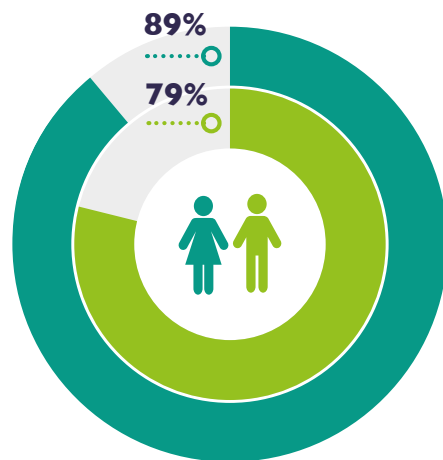
Nothing to do...except hang around at parks and stuff. That's literally it. I don't think there is owt else. ”

Parks more suited to younger children and less relevant in teenage years

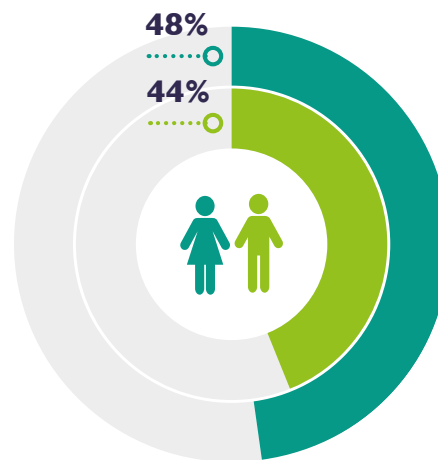
A high proportion of girls and boys used parks more when they were younger.

Just under half of girls and boys perceive parks as places for younger children, as these spaces have not grown with them and evolved into exciting and appealing spaces for teens.

Girls have positive childhood memories of enjoying activity with family and friends in parks, but play for its own sake feels too childish and less acceptable in their teenage years.



I went to parks more when I was younger



Parks are for younger kids

“ When I was smaller, I played out more. I was more social in my area. That’s when I played outside in the parks. Now, I don’t play as much. ”

“ I just used to enjoy jumping outside and be with all my mates and stuff. It used to be great fun, but obviously, now, none of my mates really want to do that. ”

“ You just grow out of it [going to parks]. It just doesn’t seem fun anymore. ”

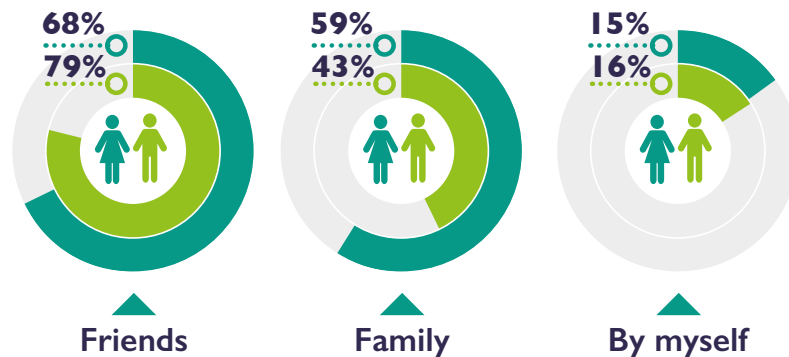
Girls use parks for socialising and more accessible forms of physical activity

In parks, girls mainly engage in walking and playing on park equipment.

Boys engage in more vigorous activity (playing games, riding bikes, running) and organised sport than girls.

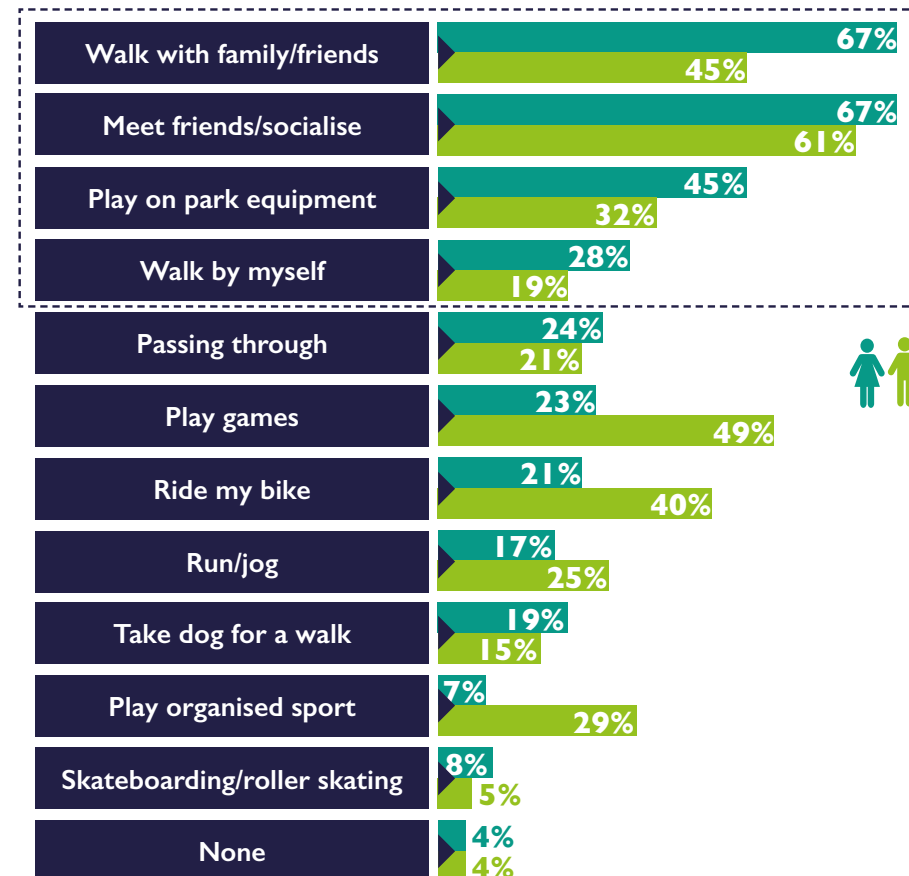
While boys and girls both frequent parks to socialise with friends, **girls are more likely to do so with family than boys**, as this gives a greater sense of security in these spaces.

People they go to parks with



“ You don’t know anyone there, you have no one to protect you if anything happens. ”

Activities teenagers engage in regularly in parks

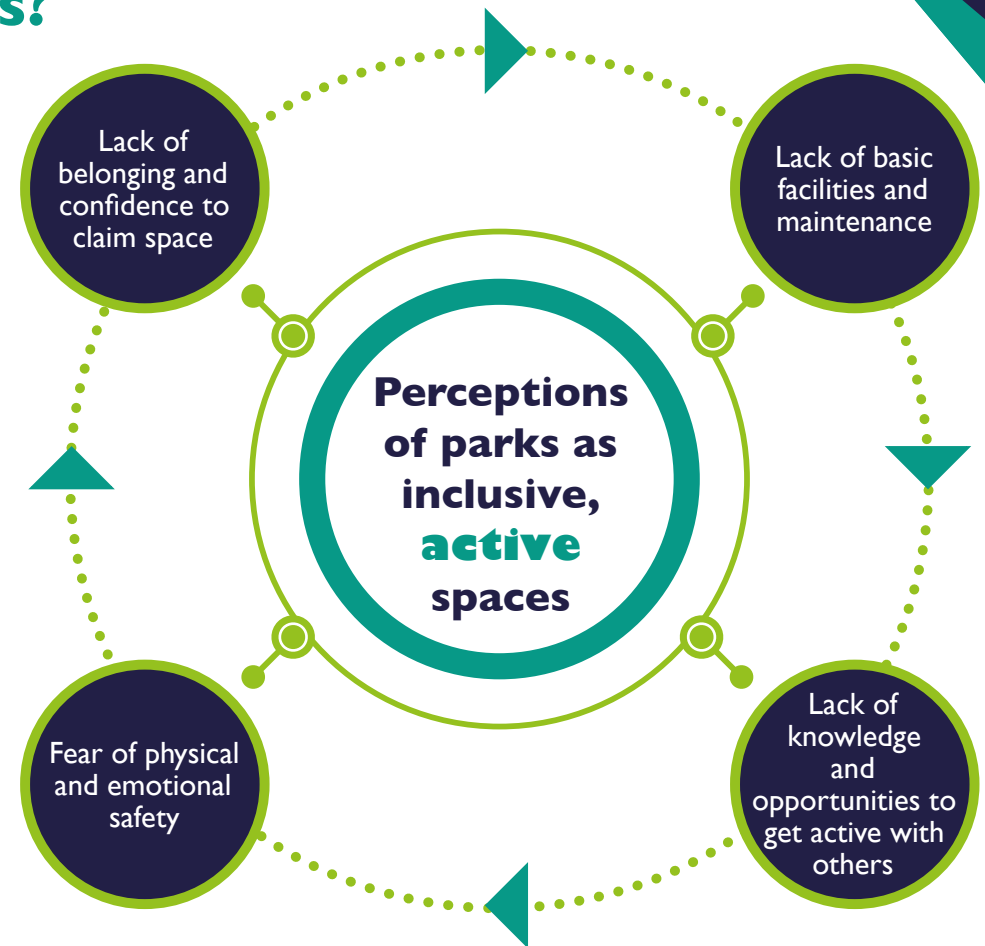


Opportunity to engage in more physical activity

What affects girls' enjoyment of being physically active in parks?

Almost twice as many boys enjoy doing sport and exercise in parks than girls. Girls don't perceive parks as inclusive, active spaces due to a number of barriers. With only a third of girls saying they enjoy doing sport and exercise in parks compared to 63% of boys it is important to understand why.

To do this we need to consider what influences girls' perceptions and use of parks and green spaces more holistically. Outdoor spaces amplify existing barriers that we know prevent teenage girls from engaging in and enjoying being active.



Lack of basic facilities and upkeep makes parks undesirable spaces for girls to be active

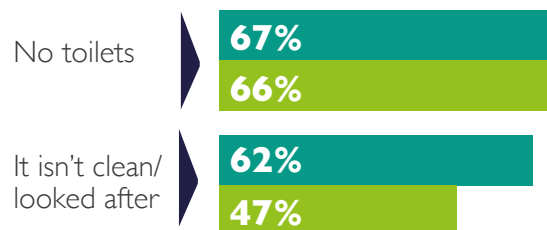
Parks that lack basic facilities and that are not well maintained:

- Fail to engage the wider community, leading to space being dominated by certain groups.
- Encourage antisocial behaviour.
- Reflect negatively on the community.
- Don't feel inviting, welcoming and safe for teenage girls.

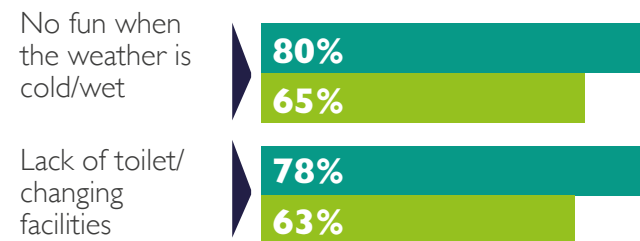
- **Weather is a stronger inhibitor to park exercise for girls (80%) than boys (66%),** which could be navigated with better facilities, spatial design, and messaging around the benefits of outdoor exercise in all weathers.



Barriers to park usage



Barriers to park exercise



Self care during puberty and teenage years is also critical for girls – a lack of toilet/changing facilities to manage their needs is a significant barrier to outdoor exercise in parks for 78% of girls.



7 in **10** girls avoid being active when on **their period**.*

“ There’s no playgrounds for little kids over there. In the courts, there’s literally nothing for kids. Seating areas...there’s literally nowhere to sit, there’s no picnic area. ”

*Source: Women in Sport (2022) Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls: Tackling Teenage Disengagement

Lack of things to do and exercise knowledge limits girls' opportunities to be active

At this life stage, teenage girls are seeking new, fun and exciting experiences and social connection, which should be embedded in physical activity.

Parks don't meet these needs for the majority of girls, with 68% saying there is nothing for them to do and 50% reporting there are no sporting activities for them.

Perceived capability is a significant barrier to outdoor exercise for girls - 68% lack knowledge of what exercise to do in parks, an environment with very little, if any, guidance.

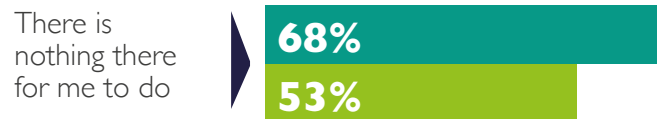
Park space and equipment tends to cater to boys' physical activity behaviours, and they are able to make better use of space/equipment than girls.

“Because there's like nothing...just sit, and then when people are sitting, they usually stare at you too... When there's not much in the park you stand out.”

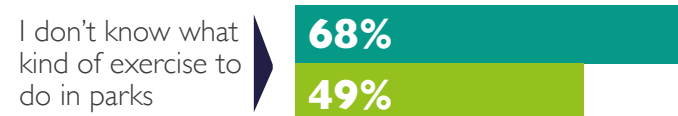
“I hate parks in general. It's just boring and there's nothing to do. I'd rather stay inside.”



Barriers to park exercise



Lack of opportunities/knowledge



Safety concerns and the presence of boys prevents girls from using parks more

Just under a third of girls say not feeling safe stops them from using parks. Girls are also more likely to be concerned about harassment.

The presence of boys increases girls' safety concerns significantly to 51%, with 41% of girls worried about harassment from boys. This stems from girls' experiences with boys in school and the wider community.

Though being active and outdoors is encouraged by parents, personal safety is also heavily reinforced. A quarter of girls are discouraged from going to their local parks compared to just 13% of boys. Girls feel safer to use parks when accompanied by family but this can also conflict with their need for greater independence in teenage years.

Safety concerns		
	Girls	Boys
Boys shout at me	41%	N/A
I've seen anti-social behaviour	30%	35%
My parents don't like me going	25%	13%
I get harassed and people bother me/my friends	20%	13%

31%  **don't feel safe**

17%  **don't feel safe**

51%  **don't feel safe if there are lots of boys in the park**

“ The park outside our house...every few days there was police cars there. There was kids loitering... it's very dodgy. ”

“ You can do stuff at home but it's not the same as being active. I really want to go to the park on weekends, after college...if I don't have my mum or anyone with me, I can't. ”

Exercise amplifies girls' concerns, due to emotional safety and fear of judgement

Exercising outdoors increases girls' perceived vulnerability, with half of girls (49%) saying they don't feel safe to exercise in parks compared to just a quarter of boys (26%).

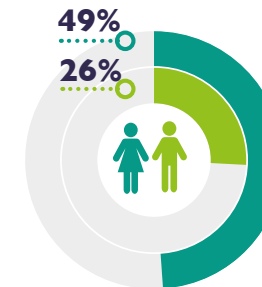
Fear of being watched, scrutinised and targeted are common and significant barriers to exercise which are amplified outdoors – 73% of girls say that other people watching stops them from being active in parks.

Girls feel highly monitored and judged in outdoor spaces by boys, girls and adults in the wider community. Judgement is rooted in:

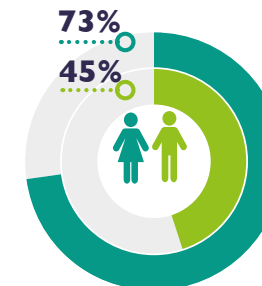
- Socio-cultural expectations of the behaviour of young women and girls (e.g. staying indoors is being a 'good girl').
- Gender stereotypes around sport and exercise (e.g. girls are less capable/ shouldn't be doing it, and notions of femininity/masculinity associated with being active).
- Lack of clear, purposeful physical activity leads to judgements around why girls are in park spaces (e.g. loitering, attention seeking, antisocial behaviour). 37% of girls feel judged for hanging around in parks, compared to 25% of boys.

Outdoor exercise provides more opportunities for girls to be scrutinised and judged. Activities such as walking with family and friends are deemed more acceptable, 'safe' and less open to scrutiny.

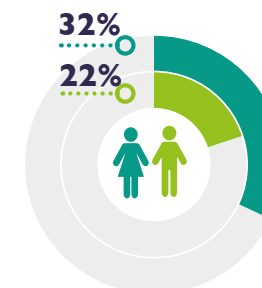
Barriers to park exercise



I don't feel safe exercising in my local park



I feel watched by others when I exercise in parks



People often shout things/make embarrassing comments

Scrutiny and judgement



I don't like being watched

“ Other people are going to see. Our family members out in the park might see you around and they might assume. It's the whole everyone's looking...looking eyes. ”

“ I wouldn't really go for parks because it's more of a public space. If it was a class indoors, the kind of class I go to with the teacher and it's inside, it's indoors...I'd choose that option as opposed to parks. ”

“ I'd do basketball inside. You can control who watches you. ”

“ I don't like the fact of people watching you...I don't like that. ”

“ In a park, it's more open. Everyone can see you doing [exercise]. It's like, kind of an embarrassment. ”

I feel judged

“ They look at us like we're going there for attention...to be looked at and stuff because there's so many boys in that area all the time. ”

“ When you go to secondary, there's way more people watching...you grow up and there's just people that you've like never met before, never seen...they're just going to judge you. Especially boys...they say that you can't do it, because they say it's boys' sports. ”

“ I feel like people just judge. They're seeing a girl play sport, it just...it feels wrong. ”

“ You know the stereotypes with parks... like, “teenage delinquents go there. ”

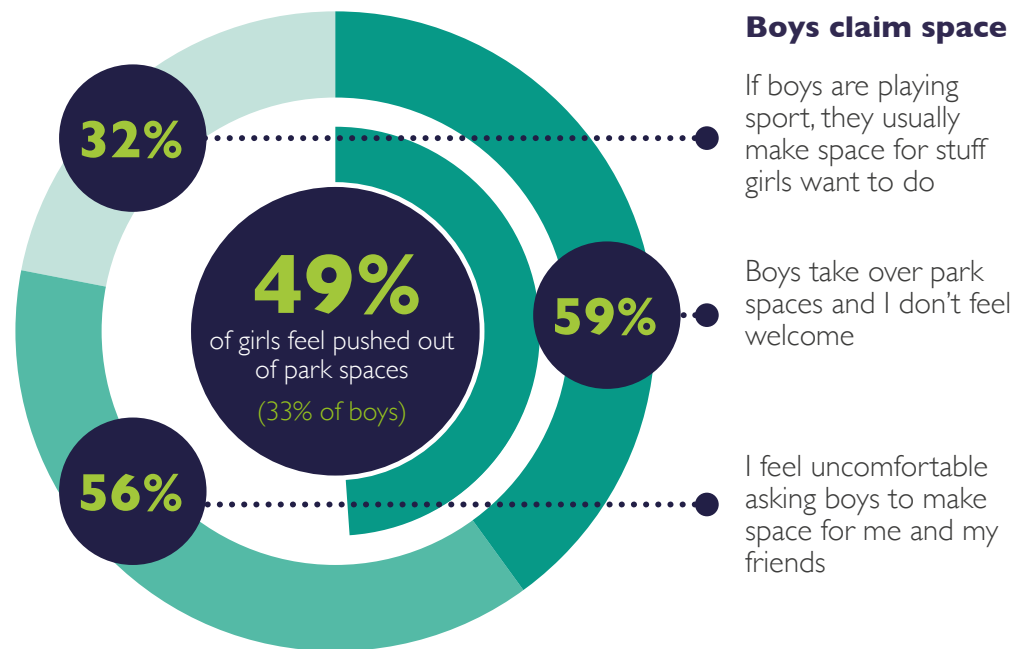
“ I used to ride the bike a lot when I was younger. Now, it's like, girls shouldn't be riding bikes...I want to ride a bike so badly right now!. ”

Many girls feel they don't belong in parks and are unable to claim space for exercise

Almost half of girls feel excluded from their local parks as they are too often dominated by particular groups, especially boys.

Active spaces and exercise equipment within parks typically cater to boys' needs. Girls lack female role models to suggest otherwise, and they rarely see anyone else using these spaces other than boys, or men.

59% of girls don't feel welcome in parks because the spaces are dominated by boys. Given their concerns around harassment and judgement, it is unsurprising that 56% of girls don't feel comfortable and confident to claim space for themselves for exercise.

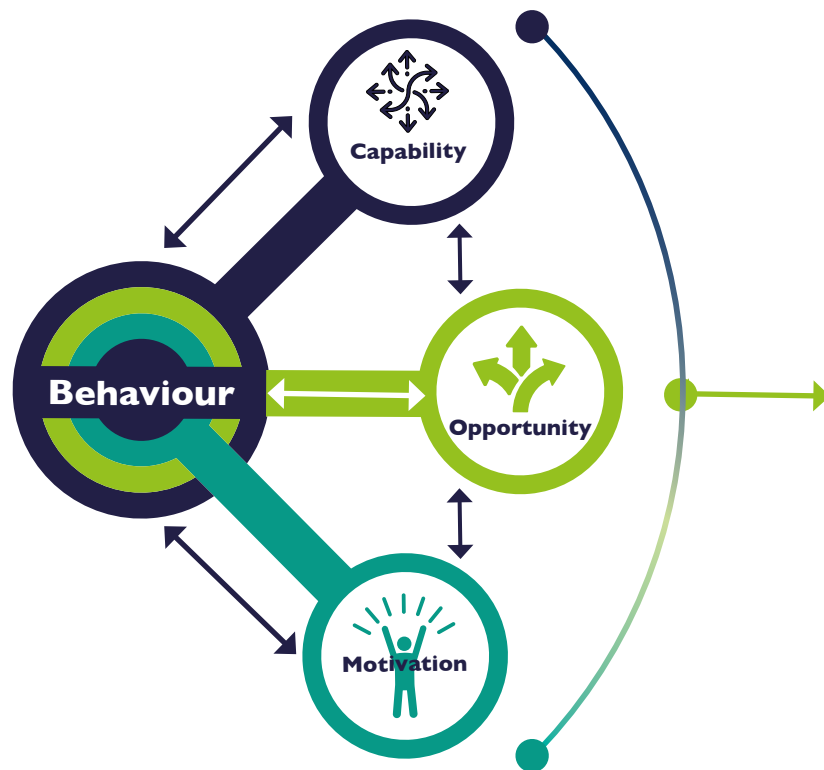


“ Me and her know them all quite well because we grew up in this area and we still can't go and say, “Can we claim the space back?” ”

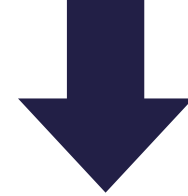
“ The [Multi-Use Games Area] is mostly boys that are there. If you go up, they'll just start shouting at you, not in a horrible way, but it gets irritating. ”

Using the COM-B model of behaviour change to help girls get active in parks

Capability, opportunity and motivation can act as barriers or facilitators to physical activity. Key barriers must be tackled and converted into facilitators to build resilience.



Barriers and/or facilitators



Resilience

For teenage girls to change their **behaviour** and become more physically active in parks, they must have the **capability**, **opportunity** and **motivation** to do so.

Source: Michie, S., M van Stralen, M. and West, R. (2011) 'The Behaviour Change Wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions', Implementation Science, vol. 6, no. 42, 1-12

Targetting the main barriers

Girls have multiple challenges when it comes to being active in parks. Park design should focus on addressing the main barriers. We need to minimise barriers and inspire and support girls to discover the potential of outdoor spaces in their area to really enjoy being active.

The barriers that are limiting their enjoyment are:

Capability



Psychological

Lack knowledge/ experience of how to exercise outdoors.

Don't identify as 'sporty'.



Physical

Don't feel good enough.

Don't feel fit/physically capable enough.

Opportunity



Social

Socio-cultural expectations and gender stereotypes stifle their behaviour:

Don't feel they belong in parks.

Don't feel able to claim space.

Don't feel they belong in sport/ exercise.



Physical

Weather and lack of basic facilities.

Nothing enjoyable for girls to do.

Lack of organised opportunities.

Lack of prompts/guidance for exercise.

Space dominated by boys.

Antisocial behaviour/harassment.

Motivation



Automatic

Parks are childish

Everyone will judge me

Fear going alone

Don't feel safe

Won't enjoy it

Too tired/too busy



Reflective

But engaging is high risk - associated with negative feelings and fear for physical and emotional safety

Desire to be more active and spend more time outdoors

Understand physical/mental health benefits of being active and

Tensions for girls in parks

It is important to think creatively about how park design and innovation can navigate some tensions that exist for girls.

Don't want to stand out (blend in).

Don't want to feel crowded/overwhelmed.

Don't want to feel watched (private space).

Don't want to feel unsafe (open space).

Want age appropriate opportunities and activities.

Want freedom to be spontaneous, play and have fun.

Want things to do with family (parents, younger siblings).

Want things to do with friends.

Empathy map – step into a girl’s world

How do girls feel about parks and being active in them?



What does she see?

Parks

- Space/equipment
- Dominated by boys and men
- Boys and men stare at me
- Few girls or women
- Young children
- Nowhere to socialise with my friends
- Dull, lacks colour and culture
- Not inviting/pleasing to be there
- Darkness, no lighting
- Broken equipment
- Graffiti, litter
- Antisocial behaviour
- No toilets and basic facilities/amenities
- Nature and green space

Exercise in parks

- Boys playing football
- Active spaces not being used for sport/exercise
- No facilities for girls – ‘basketball, never netball’
- Exercise equipment looks like no thought gone into it at all
- Exercise equipment for adults or young children
- Old/dull, broken equipment
- No toilets/changing rooms

What does she say?

Parks

- It’s boring, I hate it!
- It used to be fun but not anymore
- No time to go to the park anymore
- My family don’t have time to go with me anymore
- I don’t like going out
- There’s nothing there for me
- I like being in nature
- Green space is good for my mental health
- Nice in summer but not in winter

Exercise in parks

- I’ve never been sporty
- I used to be sporty
- There’s no sports/activities for girls
- Boys think sport is just for them
- I don’t feel comfortable to take part if boys are there
- I don’t like being watched
- I feel safer exercising inside
- Nowhere to get changed
- I want to be more fit/active
- I like going for walks
- Exercise is good for my mental health



Empathy map – step into a girl’s world

How do girls feel about parks and being active in them?

What does she hear?

Parks

- It's not safe for girls to be in parks.
- Don't go out alone
- Stay at home and focus on your schoolwork/help out
- Be a 'good girl'
- You shouldn't be talking with boys
- My friend was harassed/threatened/attacked
- News stories about parks being unsafe
- Go outside and get fresh air

Exercise in parks

- Sport is for boys, not girls
- Nasty comments from boys and girls
- Put downs from boys
- Can't do sport/exercise with boys
- Exercise should be done in private
- Walking with family is ok

What does she think and feel?

Parks

- I'm not welcome/don't belong
- I don't feel safe
- People think I'm there for attention
- Parks are for babies and kids
- Adults judge me for hanging around
- I can't do anything/go anywhere without people commenting
- No-one cares about where I live
- Connected to nature



Exercise in parks

- People are watching/judging me
- I don't know what to do
- I'm not doing it right
- Everyone will notice me
- I'm embarrassed to exercise outside
- People will think I'm childish
- Why do boys get everything?



Pains

- Safety
- Judgement
- Harassment
- Gender stereotypes, expectations and restrictions



Gains

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Freedom and independence
- Social connection and belonging
- Equal opportunities





**Opportunities to engage
teenage girls in outdoor
exercise**

Girls value outdoor space for health and wellbeing

Teenage girls' physical and mental health and wellbeing have suffered during the pandemic but we have also seen positive shifts in their attitudes and behaviours to getting active and spending time outdoors, which can be leveraged.*

Many girls have positive memories and feelings of being active in parks from childhood. This provides a positive start point, if we can reframe their current perceptions of parks to increase their relevance.

87% of girls enjoy being outdoors but only 34% enjoy doing sport and exercise in parks. We need to work much harder to close this gap and help girls discover the potential of park spaces to really enjoy being active in them.

“ I started going to the park more when there was a long lockdown. Especially the first lockdown. I felt more tempted to go to the park. ”



I enjoy being outdoors



More important than ever to spend time outdoors since the pandemic



I'd like to spend more time in my local parks



Being outdoors make me feel...
 good happy nature
 free fresh relaxed social calm
 community connected
 healthy productive
 tranquil clear-headed peaceful

“ I realised... ”Oh my God, this is what parks used to be like when I was younger.“ [after visiting a great park] ”

*Source: Women in Sport (2021) The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Girl Lives and Physical Activity

Many girls want more voice and choice in their local parks

Both boys and girls say that parks have not been designed with girls in mind

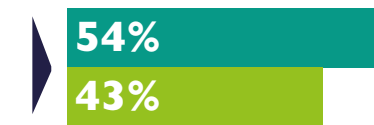
Over half of girls feel their local parks haven't been designed with consideration of their needs – and 43% of boys agree!

Many girls would like to have more say in shaping their local parks but have rarely been asked their opinion, and feel they won't be listened to. Their voice must be acted upon for any consultation and engagement to be meaningful.

Involving and co-creating with girls in the design and development of local parks will:

- Help girls to feel more invested in their local spaces and community.
- Empower them to take ownership of space.
- Encourage greater park use for physical activity.
- Drive change to create more inclusive parks for girls, as well as the wider community.

Local parks haven't been designed with teenage girls in mind



I would like to have more say in shaping my local parks



“ Graffiti, community ideas. Actually, you could get the community involved couldn't you, in designing that...it should reflect on the people who actually live there. ”

“ I feel like everything's really tailored for boys, and that you need things really for girls. ”

What would encourage girls to use parks and green spaces more?

These are the facilitators that girls said would encourage them to use parks and green spaces more. Technology comes out as the most important thing for girls. It helps girls to feel safer by having a connection and rather than trying to change the behaviour of teenage girls using their phones we can tap into their existing behaviours and habits and work with them.

Top five facilitators to greater park use		
	Girls	Boys
WiFi and/or phone charging points	66%	52%
More facilities (e.g. toilets, café)	64%	54%
If it was cleaner/better looked after	55%	51%
Better seating areas	50%	42%
More stuff to do for people like me	41%	56%

Other facilitators		
	Girls	Boys
More colour (e.g. murals, artwork, flowers)	30%	20%
Shelters	30%	35%
If I felt safer	28%	14%
More sport/exercise facilities	25%	43%
Seeing more people like me using it	19%	16%
Better lighting	18%	24%
More paths	18%	15%

(379 responses: 194 girls/185 boys)



- Connection/safety via tech
- Inviting environment
- Better facilities/things to do
- Socialising and connection



- Inviting environment
- Sport and exercise facilities
- Safety/accessibility



It makes it feel as though the council or the community pay more attention to the park. If you go to a park and it's concrete, there's no art, there's no nothing, people won't want to go there. ”



Hillsborough Park, that was nice...it's got like a lot of activity, it's got a green space. It's got a lake. It's got that big swing. It's got like two slides. It's got activities and swings and everything. It's certainly a nice park. ”



That would be amazing... I would cycle for my phone! ”



They don't have street lamps in the park...there's no lights. ”

What would enable girls to be more physically active in parks?

Not surprisingly, better toilets and changing facilities came out top for girls, which is really important when thinking about teenage girls going through puberty. Feeling safe and free from judgement is also really important.

Enablers to physical activity in parks		
	Girls	Boys
Better toilet/changing facilities	80%	74%
Feeling safe	75%	70%
Girls-only activities and spaces	68%	33%
Better sport and exercise facilities	62%	81%
More community events	60%	68%
Taster sessions to try new/different activities	59%	62%
Opportunities to take part in organised sports/activities	52%	70%
Coaching/training available for different activities	52%	58%

(379 respondents: 194 girls/185 boys)

- Facilities to manage needs
- Safe, judgement-free spaces

- Improved exercise facilities and equipment
- Organised opportunities and events to get active with others

“If you organise events, get families involved with family activities then the family can see, “Wait no, parks are actually decent.” Then they’ll feel more comfortable letting their daughters go with their friends and family friends.”

“I feel like people just judge. They’re seeing a girl play sport, it just...it feels wrong.”

“I feel because there’ll be a lot of other people doing activities. It’s not all eyes would be on you.”

“A few years ago a company did a whole event on our field and it was sports. It was a barbeque, there was face painting. The word got out, so all park families came together. That’s different to every day how you see a park normally, like this. People knew what was going on and everyone was there.”

What do girls want?

Girls want more playful, exciting, adventurous and purposeful opportunities to get active. They particularly value things that give them a sense of challenge and reward.

What would help you to do more sport and exercise in your local		
	Girls	Boys
Swings for people of my age	72%	39%
Trampolines (in ground)	70%	53%
Play/adventure equipment for people of my age	63%	48%
Nature trail/woods	38%	34%
Skate park	31%	31%
Music and dance spaces	30%	14%
Playing field	30%	50%
Smaller separate areas for sport and exercise	29%	35%
Outdoor gym equipment	28%	52%
BMX/cycle track	25%	46%
Multi-use games area (MUGA)	25%	39%

(379 respondents – 194 girls/185 boys)

- Fun, purposeful activity
- Doesn't require knowledge
- Can do with family and friends
- Challenge and reward
- Feel safe
- Connection to nature
- Can be dominated by boys
- Lack clear purpose/use
- On display/vulnerable
- Less safe
- Less accessible
- Require knowledge/skill
- Dominated by boys/unsafe
- Don't belong
- Need re-inventing to appeal to girls

“ The adventure thing is really good because it's just different to normal. It's parkour...it's tactical sometimes. It's different to just going in a park and just sitting there...it's for everyone. ”

“ I LOVE the walking path. It is really nice and peaceful. I go there weekly and love it, however, I wish there were more things for teens to do. The walking path is amazing and helps me. ”

“ When you try new things, you can also show the different things you are able to do, and it's like a bit mysterious because you don't know what you're going to try and do. ”

The ideal, active park... Created by teenage girls





**Recommendations to create
inclusive, active parks for
teenage girls**

What are the 8 Principles for Success?

Designed by Women in Sport as part of the Reframing Sport For Teenage Girls Toolkit the 8 Principles for Success was designed with girls and for girls. It has the aim of minimising the barriers that girls experience as well as making sport and exercise a more exciting and meaningful prospect in their lives.

They can be used by people to evaluate and enhance existing programmes and offers as well as developing new initiatives through a teenage girls lense.


- | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| <p>1</p> |  <p>No judgement
Take pressure off performance and give freedom simply to play</p> | <p>5</p> |  <p>Build into existing habits
Tap into existing behaviours in other spheres</p> |
| <p>2</p> |  <p>Invoke excitement
Bring a sense of adventure and discovery</p> | <p>6</p> |  <p>Give girls a voice and choice
Allow girls choice and control to feel empowered</p> |
| <p>3</p> |  <p>Clear emotional reward
Reframe achievement as 'moments of pride', not winning</p> | <p>7</p> |  <p>Champion what's in it for them</p> |
| <p>4</p> |  <p>Open eyes to what's there
Redefine sport as more than school sport</p> | <p>8</p> |  <p>Expand image of what 'sporty' looks like
Create truly relatable role models which inspire</p> |


*For guidance on applying the 8 Principles for Success see: Women in Sport - Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls Toolkit


How to use the 8 Principles for Success in parks and green spaces

Using the 8 Principles for Success it can help us think about how to reframe outdoor exercise for girls and make it much more relevant and exciting.


The principles were designed with and for girls, to help organisations think differently about how they can engage girls and also to encourage more joined up thinking. We have picked out the four that we think need some thought when making parks and green spaces more accessible and exciting for girls.


1  **No judgement**
Take pressure off performance and give freedom simply to play

 Purposeful activity and opportunities for girls-only events and exercise spaces.


4  **Open eyes to what's there**
Redefine sport as more than school sport

 Raise awareness of what the park has to offer and provide inspiration for activities.

2  **Invoke excitement**
Bring a sense of adventure and discovery

 Creative and appealing exercise spaces that excite girls.

6  **Give girls a voice and choice**
Allow girls choice and control to feel empowered

 Involve girls in the design and planning of parks and activities.

Aligning to girls' values and needs

If we can align outdoor sport, exercise and physical activity in parks with what really matters to girls at this life-stage, it can have a more relevant and meaningful role in their lives and increase and sustain their engagement.

What really matters to teenage girls? Five Anchors*

Support Network

A strong support network is vital to give girls a sense of place and identity in the world. Friends and mums in particular, are important influencers.

Socially connected

Social media plays a significant role in girls' lives, providing important validation of who they are, their friendships, popularity and success.

Independence and new experiences

This life-stage is all about independence, discovery, new experiences and making formative memories.

Moments of pride

Girls live in a world of great pressure to achieve and be good at everything, and moments of pride help to build girls confidence and realise their best.

Keeping on top of it all

This is a time when girls have to set their own priorities and juggle what they 'must do' with what they 'want to do'.

Opportunities for parks

Create opportunities to enjoy activity with family and friends

Leverage/ build on existing habits and behaviours and use tech innovatively

Inspire discovery of new/exciting experiences and possibilities

Create opportunities for girls to build confidence (challenge, pride)

Reframe parks as 'time well spent' and connection to nature and wellbeing

*Source: Women in Sport (2019) Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls: Building Strong Foundations for their Futures

Recommendations

This research provides important insights into the barriers preventing teenage girls from enjoying the wealth of benefits outdoor exercise offers, as well as key opportunities to engage them. These recommendations will help inspire and support girls to be active, and also encourage a greater diversity of users into parks to create a safer and more welcoming environment for girls.

Park developers are uniquely positioned to support girls to develop a life-long love of outdoor exercise at this formative lifestage but to do so, we must consider park usage and design through a gendered, girl-centred lens. Only then can we create more inclusive and equitable spaces for teenage girls to enjoy healthy, happy and active lives in their community.

Park providers should...



Involve teenage girls in shaping the parks and communities they live in.

Consult and co-create with local teenage girls to design and develop inclusive, active parks that meet girls' needs, and those of the wider community.



Create varied, exciting and innovative spaces to support girls to get active.

Re-imagine existing space, facilities and equipment to be more purposeful and exciting, and to minimise scrutiny and judgement for girls.

Provide more prompts and guidance to show how space and equipment can be used for physical activity.

Use and integrate technology more innovatively with physical activity.



Facilitate organised opportunities and community events for girls to enjoy physical activity with others.

Partner with local sport and exercise providers, community clubs and schools to encourage park use.

Set up local exercise initiatives for girls.

Tap into existing community groups/leaders/influencers.



Reframe perceptions of parks as active spaces for everyone, with local campaigns and messaging.

Go where girls are and open their eyes to the possibilities of parks and the joy, freedom and wellbeing benefits outdoor exercise provides.



Share learnings and good practice.

Monitor and evaluate park developments for girls and share case studies and best practice learnings to future-proof park spaces.



yorkshiresport.org/MakeSpaceForUs

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