

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

An insight guide on...



INCREASING
FEMALE
PARTICIPATION

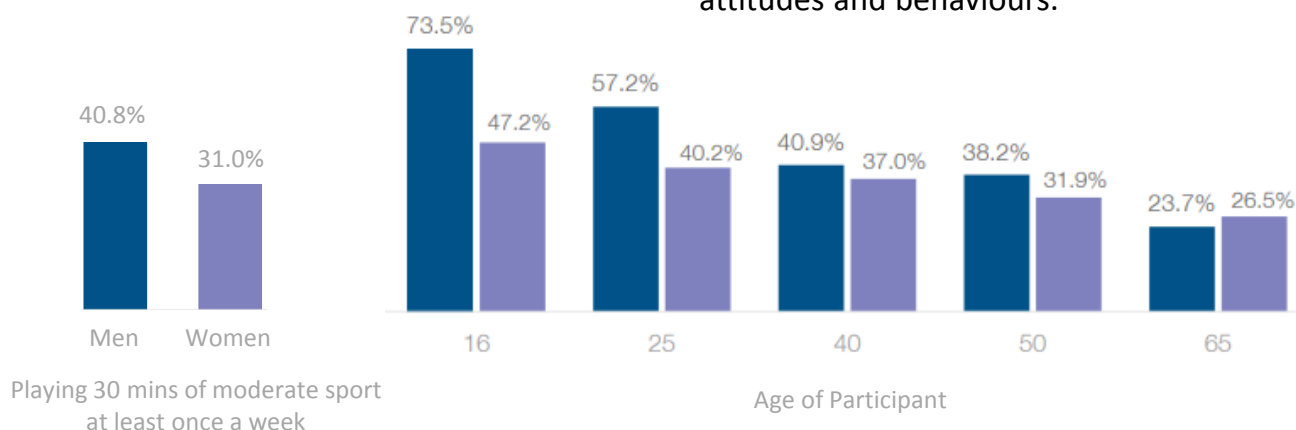
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Introduction

Research from Sport England suggests that there are 13 million women across England that want to be more active. Despite this, over 6 million of these women are not currently active.

The number of women and girls taking part in all sports and activities is lower than males at every age group (graph below), indicating a gender gap caused by practical, personal and social barriers, which in turn influences women and girls attitudes and behaviours.



The Impact

Women and girls are not only missing out on the physical and mental wellbeing benefits associated through staying active but also the wider gains, such as positive self-esteem, personal development skills, improved sleep and energy levels.

Active women are also more likely to influence whether the family unit is active too. Girls especially are more inspired by their sporty mums rather than sporting heroes or events.

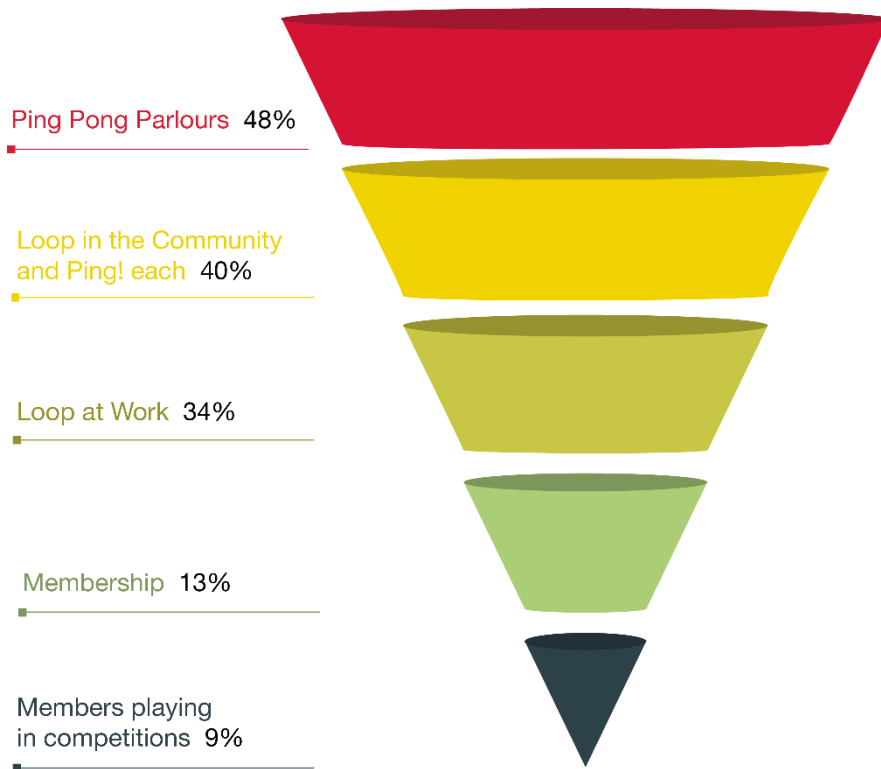
There is a wider challenge throughout sport to normalise taking part for women and girls by promoting gender equality and increasing visibility of women's sport in the media to inspire the next generations to be active.

As a sport for everyone, we want to provide equal opportunities to anyone that wants to play. Through table tennis, we aim to help women and girls be more active, have fun while doing it, and empower them to achieve their ambitions and benefit from their participation.

This document is for those wanting to engage more women in their table tennis activities. It will help you to understand:

- what the **barriers** to participation are and how to overcome them
- how to **market** sessions to women and girls
- what **sessions** might look like
- **examples** from the table tennis community of women and girls projects

Percentage of Females within Table Tennis Market



The Headlines

Within the table tennis market, the proportion of female participants declines as play move from social play into more formal, competitive play.

This data suggests that there is interest to play table tennis from women and girls, but the majority of current club offers are either not appealing or do not suitably meet the needs of this audience.

Alternatively, it could also mean the club environment itself is not an attractive option for women and girls, and will require more out of the box thinking from clubs to engage this group.

Of the 9% playing competitive table tennis in local leagues, there is no gender gap observed in the *retention*. Meaning females are just as likely to keep playing table tennis as men once playing competitively.

League retention for the 2017/2018 season is 71% for females and 72% for males suggesting:

- in table tennis, competitive women are not phased by the gender imbalance
- high enjoyment and attachment to the sport – right offer for a *particular* group of women

Understanding The Barriers

By considering what stops women and girls from getting involved, you can begin to address these obstacles to make taking part in your table tennis sessions easier and more attractive!

- Lack of time

Women are generally more reactive to needs of family and tend to take on greater responsibility for the household e.g. childcare, housework, caring for elderly relatives. Women, mothers in particular, feel guilty about using their leisure time away from their family and doing something for themselves.

Recommendations:

Deliver sessions at the same time as classes for children so that parents can attend. Is there a local nursery, crèche or child minder service your club could recommend? If your sessions are at a leisure centre can you create a joint offer with the crèche?

Table tennis sessions marketed for the family tend to attract more women than men, and may be a softer introduction for new participants to the club if they can bring their kids too.

Advertise the values of table tennis to both the family and mums – spending

quality time with friends and family benefits everyone. Happy mum = happy family!

- Personal safety

Is the area where your sessions are held well lit? Easily accessible? Well sign posted? All can become barriers and prevent women attending if these are not considered.

Recommendations:

Undertake a safety assessment of the venue – ensure the club is well lit, particularly the external lighting. Assess in the winter months when it is dark early and review in the summer when there may be more people around in the streets due to the longer daylight hours.

Ask participants about their experiences and views of personal safety in these areas - work with them to improve safety.

Consider having a member of staff available to meet and send-off participants so that entry to and from the building becomes safer.

Local, accessible venues in the community will feel more friendly and familiar to women and girls.

- Access to facilities

A lot of venues / facilities still prioritise male sports in peak/preferred times, while women have to make do with less convenient times.

Recommendations:

Depending on the group you are trying to reach, consider the most appropriate timing for the session to run that will fit in with their lifestyle. For instance, providing opportunities to schoolgirls before the start of the school day or at lunch time as well as in the evening. If you're trying to attract new mums with kids, day time would be best, whereas a morning session would be more suitable for older women.

- Body image

In general, adolescent girls report greater body image dissatisfaction than boys, and women are more self-conscious than men when taking part in sport and exercise. The more self-conscious about their bodies, the less likely females are to take part in physical activity, which would boost their confidence.

Recommendations:

Use a variety of relatable images when advertising sessions so women/girls are more likely to think it's an activity for them.

Ensure women and girls have access to single-sex changing rooms and toilets where possible.

Offer girls/women's-only sessions to build their confidence. Allow women and girls to wear what they are comfortable in rather than enforce club kit straight away. Club kit is great for making people feel like part of something, but introduced too early can be intimidating. In an initiative between Youth Sport Trust and Nike Girls in Sport found that allowing girls to wear what they like in PE helped increase participation.

Leeds United Foundation PL4S Satellite

initially offered girls-only taster sessions during the school day for the first few weeks so they can learn what is expected of them. The girls were the ones to take ownership and decide whether to keep the sessions as girls-only or to have a mixed session with the boys. Two-way communication with the girls is what really made the project work. There was a small budget available for kit, so a group of girls volunteered to be in charge of sourcing and designing hoodies for the wider group. Giving the girls some responsibility allowed them to develop soft skills beyond table tennis, but also meant they were more invested and committed to the group.



- Lack of self-confidence

Girls typically have lower confidence than boys and as a result, tend to rate their ability more negatively. Self-confidence is also linked to competition, which for many can turn women off sport altogether regardless of ability.

Recommendations:

Set up a buddy or mentoring system with the more experienced players supporting new or less experienced participants.

Garstang TTC hold a girls only session on a Monday from 3.15-4.15pm for year 7s i.e. those who are new to the school. Those players beyond year 7 help with coaching and support the younger players.

Ensure all women/girls have the opportunity be part of all activities regardless of skill level or experience. Find a way to level the playing field so everyone feels included.

When awarding prizes at competitions, alternate the order of presentations, matches and mentions, fixtures and newsletters so that women's sport is not unintentionally presented as inferior to men.

Draycott TTC encourage and train their girls to be able to lead the warm ups, which improves their confidence in front of the boys. The club's junior representative is nearly always a girl selected from the junior girls squad, reinforcing their value at the club.

“ I don't think I'm good enough to play in a club ”

1 in 4 girls are unhappy with their body image at 11-13 years old

“ I don't want the commitment of playing regularly in a club ”

There are 2 million fewer women than men regularly playing sport

“ Although I like competitive play, leagues can be very serious and stuffy. I want a fun league ”

- Parental + adult influence

Adolescent girls are more strongly affected by comments from adults compared to boys. Adverse comments from parents, teachers and coaches are the main reason for girls becoming discouraged from taking part in sport, showing the significant impact they have on girls' motivation. Girls are more likely to enjoy sport if they have been given realistic goals and have been supported and encouraged for their efforts.

At **Deighton TTC** mums coming along to family sessions are a stronger influence on their daughters than the coaches. The daughters are more likely to continue playing if their mums do, but may end up going to a different session once they've built up their confidence.

Recommendations:

Encourage parents to be positive role models for their children, by being interested in their sporting activities.

Organise mother/daughter or father/daughter sessions to help create a supportive family culture.

Use images on posters of female role models in your venue to support the norm of girls in the sport, preferably of local club members but you can also use images from the This Girl Can photobank.

Reward good behaviour as well as good performance for encouragement and to keep them coming back.



Understanding The Audience

under 18s

Sport England have generated youth personalities to help sport deliverers understand more about the young people you are trying to reach, which could be considered when designing sessions for under 25s.

For those over 25, this guide has used a selection of female profiles from Sport England, to help understand the life stages and attitudes of those most likely to be currently taking part, or likely to take part in future.

The information on the following pages summarises these personalities and relates them to table tennis. While each person will fit one category best, some will have characteristics that overlap into more than one group.

Take the time to get a solid picture of what's going on in your local area; understand what other activities are offered, who are the women that live in your local area, e.g. mums, career women, students etc.

To find out more on market segmentation and see the dominant segments in your area, go to: <http://segments.sportengland.org/>

Confident Intellectuals

Driven, educated and highly motivated. They need a friendly, familiar environment to play in; they're more likely to take part in sports their friends are interested in.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Reassurance that they don't need experience or skills to get involved
- ☐ Level the playing field so they don't feel they're falling behind or being judged
- ☐ Recognise and reward improvement and perseverance

*“ I was nervous about trying to fit in & not being as good as everyone else.
I was happy my friends were coming too though ”*

Beginner at club session, 11

Everyday Youths

Easy-going, relaxed people who prefer to prioritise friends and family. Whilst they can feel quite positive about sport they are less likely to make the time to take part.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Emphasise the social element
- ☐ Fun, friendly + relaxed
- ☐ Be flexible to allow people to drop in and out

“ It was good fun to meet new people whilst playing ”

Ping! participant

Ambitious Self-Starters

Typically high achievers with lots of hobbies, they see sport as another way to achieve their goals and look for continual improvement.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Emphasise the opportunities to develop new skills
- ☐ Encourage them to compete and progress - either against themselves or others
- ☐ Continue to challenge them

“ I like getting the competition experience against players of my age, from which I can learn from & develop ”

League Player, 17

Thoughtful Improvers

Motivated, mature people who like to use their free time productively. They take part to help them cope with stress and because it can make them feel good.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Highlight the opportunities to achieve personal goals such as fitness
- ☐ Keep activities casual and informal - allow players to set their own pace
- ☐ When introducing competition, make it fun so the focus remains on having a go, self-development and taking part

“Table tennis has increased my confidence – it has allowed me to make a new network of friends & talk to new people ”

Satellite Club participant, 16



Cautious Introverts

Careful decision makers who are less comfortable trying new things. They are less likely to take part in physical activity or recognise its benefits.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Use messages of casual activity, low commitment and no pressure.
- ☐ Build their confidence through enjoyment in a fun, friendly, relaxed environment
- ☐ Recognise and reward commitment and perseverance

“ The Parlour is really good, especially that there’s nobody watching over so we don’t feel awkward ”

Ping Pong Parlour participant

Sport Enthusiasts

Mad about sport – confident, sociable, and generally love being involved for enjoyment.

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Highlight the opportunities to train, improve and compete
- ☐ Create a sociable environment with a work hard – play hard atmosphere
- ☐ Support a constant learning curve and help them achieve emotional highs to keep them coming back

“ I have achieved more & got further in table tennis than I would in the other sports I play – having that success has given me a boost ”

Club Player, 17

Understanding The Audience

over 25s

Helena; mainly aged 26 - 45

Fairly active, take part in sport on a regular basis to keep fit and for the enjoyment. Work commitments may prevent this group from taking part regularly but they will engage with the right offer

What a TT session should consider:

- ☐ Flexible offer, low commitment
- ☐ Emphasise messages of relaxation and ‘me time’
- ☐ Informal coaching for those wanting to improve

“ Table tennis is good fun & relatively easy exercise during the working day ”

Loop at Work participant, 35-44

Values of Female TTE Members

I play table tennis....

- to feel fit and healthy / for fitness
- to be competitive and improve my skills
- because it’s part of who I am

Elaine; mainly aged 46 – 65

Mid-life professionals who now have more time for themselves. They take part for mainly enjoyment, keeping fit and looking/feeling good.

What a TT session should consider

- ☐ Incorporate social aspect to sessions e.g. drinks break
- ☐ Highlight the most relevant benefits table tennis offers to this age group
- ☐ Introduce competition as a fun activity to emphasise the social element and personal skills

“ I’m quite an active person so I was looking for an activity. Living on your own means you can get isolated, you have to force yourself to get out ”

Over 50s club session participant

Joy; mainly aged 46 - 65

Early retirement age with free-time, nearing the end of their careers. Aware of the benefits of being active and keeping fit; will continue playing for the enjoyment and the social element.

What a TT session could consider:

- ☐ 50+ sessions – morning sessions work well
- ☐ Talk about the benefits of playing
- ☐ Incorporate breaks to socialise

“ I was approaching retirement & was looking for a fun exercise based activity to do. I wanted to learn more & more so I joined a local club, now I play 3-4 times a week! ”

Over 50s club session participant

Phyllis; mainly over 65

Comfortable retired couples enjoying active and comfortable lifestyles. Generally more active than others in their age range but long term health conditions are the most likely barrier to participating.

What a TT session could consider:

- ☐ Provide reassurances about safety
- ☐ Show you can adapt sessions to suit all abilities
- ☐ Include regular breaks

“ My husband & I are both in our 70s & recently got into table tennis table on holiday. From our initial game we were hooked, so decided table tennis was a way to keep fit & improve hand eye coordination. Plus we can take on the grandchildren when they visit! ”

Table purchased for home



Engaging Women & Girls

Attracting Attention

A trigger is often required to spark people into action. Coming across the right information at the right time might be enough for some people.

For instance, in addition to advertising in places people will already looking for ways to take part, such as your Local County Sport Partnership (CSP) or the BBC Be Inspired website. Also think about the non-sport venues where women and girls may stumble across playing opportunities by chance e.g. mum and baby groups, crèches, school gates, shopping centres, coffee shops.

Consider the most appropriate channels of communication, such as posters, social media, radio, Google ads. Which options are most likely to reach your target audience? Consider the lifestyle and behaviours for this group; where do already go that they will see your advertisements.

Tap into the power of the *This Girl Can* branding – it's what it's there for! Visit the website to find out more about the brand toolkit, access free to use photos and poster templates:
www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/register

The Hook

Specific time-limited incentives or rewards can create a sense of urgency and trigger action. Here are some club examples of table tennis offers:

- Free taster sessions
- Refer a friend – discount for member, free first session for friend
- Loyalty card e.g. 5 sessions get 1 free
- Buying block sessions upfront to receive a discount compared to paying at each session
- Offer subsidised club membership

Weymouth TTL offered sessions for £1 a week, or £5 for all 8 sessions. There was also a special bat deal available which was the most popular; £10 for all 8 sessions & participants received a beginners bat which also encouraged the women & girls to keep playing.

The Message

- Keep the tone warm, friendly, positive and professional
- When talking about the benefits of table tennis, match the benefits to the group you are trying to reach. For instance, 50+ are more likely to be interested that table tennis is a great sport for the brain to ward off Alzheimer's and delaying dementia. Young people will be more interested in the social aspects and skill development that table tennis provides.
- Always communicate key details of sessions to make it easy for people to attend. Communicate the time, place, what to bring/wear, who the session is for, cost and who to contact for more info.

Visuals

Use photos from real sessions – ask friends or family to use photos of them before expanding to images of regular session attendees. **Always get permission.**

Avoid images of people in big groups as some people may find it intimidating, rather, focus in on one or two people having a good time.

Get consent from parents if you are wanting to use photos of under 18s. Do not use images that could lead to the identification of the children, e.g. names and locations. If you are not sure about using images of children, check the advice and guidelines on the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) website.

Use people of all ages, shapes and sizes in your imagery so that your target audience can identify with them. If your sessions aren't for creating the next National champion, don't use images of competitive players.

By registering on the This Girl Can website you can access a photo bank of logos and images to help you get your sessions stand out.

Top Tips from Other Programs

“ Images of normal women in relaxed, non-sporty clothes resonates much more than really sporty images. ”

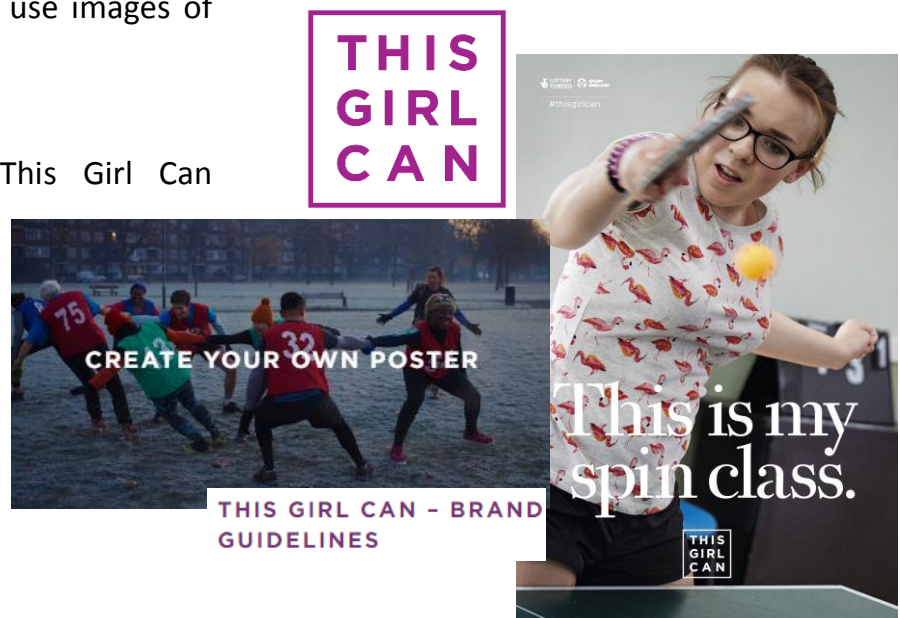
I Will If You Will, Bury Council

“ Don't try to sell the sport to them – instead tell them how the activity will make them feel, for example, fun, social, feel-good ”

Us Girls project, Street Games

“ In order for your sport to engage women, speak to their core values which will inform their decision making and behaviour ”

Women in Sport



The Sessions: What Works

Fun + Informal. Keep the aim of the sessions about having fun – be creative with drills to keep participants interested and engaged.

Dress Code. Let them wear what they want, as some may find an imposed dress code intimidating. **Leeds PL4S Satellite Club**, initially asked that girls wear sports kit, but later allowed the girls to wear what they want.

Role Models. **Garstang TTC** and **Draycott TTC** both have top class female players at their clubs, which has encouraged other local women and girls to join the club. However, women and girls are just as inspired by women they can relate to. **Halton TTC** used girls that were already playing from the club to help support the sessions and act as role models to younger girls.

Communication. At the beginning of each session tell them about what you have planned, but also be flexible and adaptive to what the girls want to do.

Chelmsford TTL asked participants to complete feedback forms at the end of the project, and have made changes to the project as a result of the feedback.

Allow time to **socialise** whether that's with breaks, rotating partners or games that provide interaction with different people in the group.

Stowmarket TTC found at their after school sessions the girls liked to be able to chat and socialise. Sessions were kept informal, and the coach used fun, creative games to teach strokes.

“ The girls didn’t realise they were learning technical skills, they were just having fun ”

Choice. Clubs that are successfully engaging and retaining more women and girls have shown to have a range of offers. As illustrated below, a participant can come along to *any* club session, and should ideally have a variety of ‘exit’ options if that session isn’t right for them or they are unable to make the time offered for that particular session.



Flexible. Be prepared to be reactive and adapt sessions based on participants ability, but also, to meet the needs of what they enjoy.

“ Be able to pick out those that want more and want to learn techniques ”

Northfield TTC

Split. As the group size grows you may want to consider separating the group, whether by age or ability. Both **Withington Girls School** and **Glossop TTL** had large enough groups to separate the junior and senior girls.

“ The Year 7 and 8’s were pleased to have more guidance and were open to trying new things and having fun, whereas the Year 10’s just wanted to be left to enjoy themselves ”

Glossop TTL

Competition. When introducing competition, try to maintain the focus of the session to be about fun, for instance, Top Table has shown to be particularly successful.

Remember the customer experience!

- Greet them as they arrive, using names where possible
- Buddy them up
- Ask how they found the session
- Tell them when the next session is or re-direct them to a session that might better fit their needs

Qualities of a Coach

The coach may not always be coaching, but their actions and approach strongly influence the overall feeling of a session. Creating a positive and encouraging environment is particularly important for those just starting out in table tennis to help kick start and inspire a women and girls initiative.

Whilst other sports suggest a female coach influences participation in women and girls, our insight says the *personality* of the coach has a much stronger influence.

Coaches can help women and girls build self-belief and confidence, irrespective of their ability or their experience in sport

UK Coaching

A coach should:

- Be friendly and approachable
- Have a positive, supportive attitude
- Be enthusiastic and passionate
- Know when to coach and know when to take a step back

However, there may be some instances where a female coach is required for certain cultures. It’s important to be aware that males cannot enter the session at any time, which includes cleaning staff or administrators and organisers from the club.

CASE STUDY:

Deighton TTC

The Problem

Like many clubs, Deighton TTC were seeing fewer and fewer women and girls coming through their doors. The club had ambitions to be more inclusive, engage more juniors and reach under-represented groups in the local community.

Overcoming Barriers

Deighton TTC have used existing female club players to develop them into coaches: one was a player in the local league who moved to the club; the other was the mother of a girl who joined the club after attending a Disability Yorkshire event. The mother would regularly bring her daughter to the club but she herself was enjoying the table tennis, getting more and more involved as a participant, later becoming a volunteer and then a Level 1 coach.

The club has also created strategic relationships to work with trusted groups with shared goals to get more women and girls active, such as Locala, Leeds Active and Kirklees Council. Through these partnerships, the club has been able to engage new mums to get active after birth, and taken table tennis into retirement homes and encourage people to subsequently attend the club.



Attracting Attention

The club were fortunate in that they could promote coaches that can speak a range of languages to build a welcoming, inclusive club culture. Not only were coaches multi-lingual, they also undertook sign-language courses, which helped engage under-represented groups in the community.

There was already a high number of ladies going to the local leisure centre, so Deighton TTC connected with them to help promote table tennis. Posters advertising the sessions at the club were displayed around the leisure centre. Getting involved in joint fundraisers with the leisure centre improved visibility and awareness of the club to potential participants.

The club also linked up with a netball team, establishing a *'we'll come to yours if you come to ours'* ethos. From this, both sport participants and coaches learnt transferable skills – developed reaction skills, sharing drills and have fun while doing so.

The Offer

In addition to the ladies only session, Deighton also offer a family session which has naturally attracted more women, particularly mums who played years ago. Mothers bring their kids along who have played on holiday and want to keep playing.

The ladies attending started enjoying the table tennis so much that they go to both the family session and the ladies only session. Some are now also going to the social sessions just to have an opportunity to play more.

“ Girls who were initially shy are growing their confidence after only a few weeks. Their confidence has grown so much so that they now want to compete against the boys! ”

For those wanting to play competitively, the lower division in the local league is available to them but can progress to play in higher divisions. The more competitive, ambitious players have been motivated and encouraged at the prospect of further progression.

What Makes it Work

There are a range of casual playing opportunities for women, so they can choose what session meets their needs and wants.

For instance, an older person might attend a taster session and decide to go to the over 55s session, similarly someone who has played before but has less time might be content to go to social sessions when they can.

These sessions don't interfere with the traditional club offer but it's still available for those that do want to play more competitively. The informal, social sessions help support traditional play and the local league.

Advice

- Focus on making the sessions fun!
- Using female coaches is particularly successful when delivering sessions in schools to get girls interested.



CASE STUDY:

Chelmsford CHS Satellite Club



Getting Started

Through the Jack Petchey Foundation some years ago the school received 4 x good quality tables and equipment. The school was fully supportive of table tennis and incorporated it into the curriculum to ensure the students made the most of the equipment. The coach accessed funding through Premier League 4 Sport to pay for coaching, when funding stopped in 2017 the school linked to Chelmsford TTC and set up as a satellite club to ensure activity could be sustained.

Attracting Attention

Sessions were advertised on a notice board within the school and promoted by the teachers. There is a wide choice of extra-curricular activities available at the school so the table tennis had to compete for students attention. One disadvantage of the table tennis sessions was that they had to be charged in order to be sustainable, whereas other activities were offered for free.

The Offer

Ran once a week for 2 hours; with the first session from 4-5pm for beginners (~12 years old), and 5-6pm for the more experienced girls (~14 years old).

The first 6 weeks were offered for free to see who enjoyed it, thereafter £2 per session. This was communicated to parents via a form sent home to notify that half a year would need to be charged in advance to ensure fees could be covered.

At the start of session the girls were told what the format would be. Sessions were typically divided into warm up, fun activities, and would finish with games that used the skills they gained and/or top table.

“ Using the robot was much more engaging for practising specific strokes and the girls love it! ”

Each week was carefully thought out to keep the girls interested and engaged. The coach invented fun, creative challenges to keep sessions appealing. For instance, '60-second challenge' where players move between 8 separate stations with different challenges, accumulate scores from each station and add them up at the end. It could also be as simple as using different types and sizes of bats.

Every second week the girls were allowed to have music of their choice for the session, which made a really good tool for giving the girls some ownership.

The Result

- Inspired girls to play who had never tried table tennis before
- 10-15 girls attending each week from the start of the school year
- Engaged inactive girls as well as super sporty girls – shows table tennis offers something for everyone
- 5 girls now play at Chelmsford TTC with 2 more joining later this year as a result. have the opportunity to exit into a league especially for beginners – Chelmsford Click League

What Makes it Work

Teachers at the school are supportive but they're not table tennis coaches – clubs need to be able to offer table tennis specific support.

A passionate coach who focuses on making each session fun and listening to what the girls want. Sometimes the girls will ask for what they want to do – important to be flexible and adapt.

Advice

Make the sessions fun. If sessions are too stringent and formal you'll lose them; keep it fun and they'll come back and bring their friends.

Part of the role of the coach is to identify those that want to play more seriously and sign post them on to a more suitable offer, such as a club environment. It's important to have a positive relationship with a local club that can support potential new players.

CASE STUDY:

Chelmsford TTL

The Offer

Acknowledging there was a lack of competitive women and girls in their league, Chelmsford wanted to increase female participation saw an opportunity of how the league could have an impact.

The league organised 8 coached sessions over 8 weeks on their 16 tables. Sessions always finished by doing something fun e.g. top table or 'Click' match. The Click match format was 2 vs 2: singles, singles, double, then reverse singles, singles.

Getting Started

The league received funding from TTE in 2016/17 to support hire of the sports hall for the initiative and to purchase bats, balls and a pick up net.

Through the previous season's development work with TTE, several local league players had become UKCC Level 1 Coaches, which provided confident deliverers to design and drive the initiative.

A coach working with several local Chelmsford schools had already created an appetite for table tennis, resulting in a dozen girls eager to join the project.

Existing league players were contacted to recommend women and girls interested in developing their table tennis further.

Adapting

The existing 'Click League' was re-engineered so rather than it running Oct – May, it ran in three separate and distinct 'seasons': Oct – Dec, Jan – Mar, and Jun – Aug. This flexibility provided new juniors three entry points throughout the year into the Click league, reducing the risk of losing a potential player from the sport altogether through frustration of having to potentially wait until the following season to get in a team.

The Result

- Typically 18 girls attending each week
- ~10 girls joined Chelmsford TTC
- 8 girls joined the league
- 2 x all girls teams in the Click league
- Great experience – girls have also taken up the opportunity to play in local, regional junior tournaments and for their school
- Created a pathway from grassroots participation feeding into the local league and other competitive opportunities

What Makes it Work

A strong relationship between local schools, the club and the league; all working together towards a shared goal.

Understanding the barriers for participants and adapting to meet their needs – not expecting juniors to fit the existing offer but being flexible and adjusting to make taking part as easy as possible.

Advice

Support

- Recruit as many volunteers to assist coaching as possible – one per table is ideal.
- Use like-minded players who share your ambitions to increase female participation. Female participants respond better to positive, friendly individuals and will be more likely to keep coming back.

Plan

- Find out if any organisations promoting female sport can support your project
- Run a session for those assisting the sessions before they start so they know what to do and stay motivated
- Recruit league's top women to do an exhibition match in one of the sessions to keep attendees inspired

Session Delivery

- Split beginners from intermediates in coaching sessions where possible
- Split girls/young women from mature/older women if you have the numbers to do so

Exit Routes

- Run a junior tournament following the course to give girls the opportunity to play boys in a competitive environment
- Local clubs should be prepared to receive new participants and support the transition and have safeguarding policies in place

CASE STUDY:

Colchester Girls High School

A pilot project to attract more girls to table tennis in school was delivered through the Jack Petchey Foundation; a charity to support young people achieve their potential.

Attracting Attention

The coach met with the Head of PE to sell the benefits of table tennis. Sessions were advertised through the school newsletter, and reported on after each session to maintain awareness.

The Offer

Sessions were delivered at lunch time sessions for ~45 mins. The purpose of the sessions were for the girls to have fun in a safe environment. The girls learnt strokes without knowing it, through teaching skills by modifying games. E.g. round the world but can only play a forehand. Gracie Edwards, 16 year old local champion, came along to one of the lunch time sessions, taking part in *Top Table* so every participant got the chance to take her on. The girls found Gracie very inspirational to see someone successful their own age that they could relate to.

The Result

- Average of 25 participants per week
- Developed a positive attitude towards sport from the girls
- Engaged some girls that had never played before

What Makes it Work

The coach – enthusiastic, adaptive, understands how to engage the intended audience; the sessions are about having fun rather than achieving membership targets.

What the Participants Say

“The sessions are fun and the coach is really good and friendly

You can change it to different ways so it's always fun

It's lots of fun and we play lots of games

I can have fun with my friends while keeping healthy

You can against anyone with any ability and still have fun”

Advice

Have to deliver sessions so the girls want to come back the next week – put the participants at the heart of what you do

As a coach, have to be inspirational to get people to love table tennis – get them engaged first and then get them hooked on the sport

If the coach is not more enthusiastic than the participant then they'll get another coach

With thanks to the following schools, clubs and leagues for their contribution:

Deighton TTC

Garstang TTC

Chelmsford County High School

Draycott TTC

Chelmsford TTL

Stowmarket TTC

Colchester Girls High School

Halton TTC

Leeds United Foundation PL4S Satellite

Withington Girls School

Weymouth TTL

Glossop TTL

Other Useful Resources:

This Girl Can

<http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/>

Sport England – Research into Women and Girls

<https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/women/>

Sport England segments:

<http://segments.sportengland.org/>

Women in Sport

<http://www.womeninsport.org/>

BBC Get Inspired

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/get-inspired>

Child Protection in Sport Unit:

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/photography/>



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