‘Playing Like a Girl’:
Rising to the challenge of increasing female participation in physical activity and sport in Northern Ireland

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Physical inactivity
How much physical activity for health benefit?

“....at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more”

“....60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity”

Department of Health (2011) Start Active, Stay Active: a report on physical activity from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers
% Population meeting guidelines

at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more

Murphy, MH et al (2012) Physical activity, walking and leanness: An analysis of the Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS). Preventive Medicine, 54 (2) 140-144.
Children meeting physical activity recommendations

Where do people get their physical activity?

Work is main source of physical activity for men + Domestic activity for women

Sport only a small proportion of overall physical activity reported 18% of total

Only 31% of women report participating in sport (25% in CHS 2011/12)
Correlates of PA participation for Women

Individual
- Self-efficacy
- Readiness to change
- Perceived benefits
- Current level of PA

Social
- Support from family, friends and peers

Environmental
- Access to facilities
- Perceived safety
- Programme format
Motives & Barriers

- Enjoyment
- Health
- Weight Control
- Competence
- Social
- "Not the sporty type"
- Lack of Time
- Lack of support
- Low self-efficacy
- Cost

Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)
walk@Work

12 week intervention  390 participants (290 women)
Automated web-based programme ~ Individualised targets
25% increase in daily steps at work using a pedometer and automated web-based programme

The **WISH** Study: Peer-led Walking In ScHools

- Feasibility study with low-active adolescent girls
- 190 participants in 6 schools.
- Short walks delivered during school day
- Facilitated by peer ‘Walk Leaders’ (aged 16-18)

- Incentivised via school rewards system
- Reward stamps for each walk completed
- Increased physical activity
- Decreased sedentary behaviour

Carlin A, Murphy MH and Gallagher AM

The APP Trial

- Pilot intervention to reduce the decline in PA during pregnancy
- 3 PA consultations + weekly walking group + text/call support
- Primagravida mothers (n=109)
- PA, mood, self-esteem, and Quality of life measured at 12, 20, 36 weeks and 8 weeks postpartum
- Gestational weight gain, obstetric outcomes.

Promising female-friendly initiatives?

- 90.3% of 8000 participants female
- 85.7% of the 2800 participants female
- 46% of 113,000 participants - female
We are born into societies that shape our personalities, values, beliefs and preferences.
Modern sports and pastimes were developed mainly by men for men.

Patriarchal dominance ON and OFF field of play.

Modern sports and pastimes were developed mainly by men for men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRFU Rugby</td>
<td>1879</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFA Football</td>
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<td>GAA Football</td>
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<th>1991</th>
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<tr>
<td>IFA Football</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>NIWFA</td>
<td>1976</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAA Football</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>LGFA</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAA Hurling</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>CCnG</td>
<td>1904</td>
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<td>WFAI</td>
<td>1973</td>
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Patriarchal dominance ON and OFF field of play.

Gendered values and ideologies embedded in modern sport since 1900s

Women - Flex your muscles in certain ways up to a certain point

Equality by coincidence or by design?
Barriers

- Social/Cultural
- Institutionalized gender logic
- Environmental
- Individual
Societal Enablers

Self-efficacy
Leadership
Programmes

Gender Quotas
Equality
Targets

Gender Mainstreaming

Role models
Narrow
social
distance
Sport and PA are a key kernel of social life
‘Cultural traction’ of sport

Instead of individual-oriented approaches, Norwegian sports policies adopt society-level perspectives
In the late 1990s, women accounted for 46 per cent of those employed in Norwegian sports.

Gender quota regulation since 1987 for elected members in decision-making bodies in sport.
Men dominate senior roles in judiciary, health, education and politics

20% of 108 seats
22 females at Stormont

Less 1/3 of NI’s most important jobs are held by women

PSNI’s senior ranks are male-dominated

15% of QCs are women
5 of top 100 businesses are led by women

Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)
Recommendations

- Commission formal research into gender gap in sport and physical activity
- Establish Assembly group on gender mainstreaming
- Cross-departmental national physical activity plan
- Implement and evaluate female-friendly interventions
- Develop PA surveillance system including determinants of female non-participation
Policy on the hoof. Why?
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