

FEMALE

SPORTS FORUM

WOMEN & GIRLS

ACTIVE, FIT & SPORTY



In partnership with:



ABOUT US

Five Governing Bodies joined forces in January 2010 to establish the “Female Sports Forum” to work together to increase opportunities for females to participate in sport and physical activity. Our aim is to raise the profile of female sport and create a better sporting experience for all women and girls at whatever level or ability across Northern Ireland.

The forum is a unique collaboration between Ulster Hockey, Ulster Camogie, Ulster Ladies Gaelic, Ulster Rugby and the Irish Football Association. We are supported by Sport Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Sports Forum and Ulster University.

We look forward to expanding the membership of the Female Sports Forum and welcoming new partners to support our work.

The Female Sports Forum was established by the following organisations:



CUMANN
CAMÓGAÍOCHTA
ULADH
ULSTER CAMOGIE



**This publication is supported by
Department for Communities.**



FOREWORD



Since the Female Sports Forum was founded in 2010, the five partner Governing Bodies, supported by the Northern Ireland Sports Forum, Sport Northern Ireland and Ulster University, have been determined to; raise the profile of women and girls in sport and physical activity, provide increased opportunities for more women and girls to be active and enjoy, play, watch and work in sport.

Sport has been and continues to be an important part of my life. It helped shape me growing up, teaching me valuable life lessons such as leadership, teamwork, discipline and respect. I participated in a range of sports, and was fortunate to have had the opportunity to gain Senior International honours in both hockey and football. Sport has also provided me with opportunities to work in the sports sector and develop my own career.

I therefore have first-hand experience of the positive impact that sport and physical activity can have on women and girls. Apart from the obvious, well documented health benefits it helps to boost self-esteem and confidence. It also encourages women and girls to become part of a team and strive to be the best that they can be.

However, these are challenging times for women and girls sport and physical activity. Women are still playing far less sport than men, there are fewer women than men represented on National Governing Body of Sport Boards, and in relation to media coverage women's sport is a small percentage of all sports media coverage. We also know from research carried out by Sportscoach UK in 2015 that there are also

fewer female coaches (21%) across Northern Ireland when compared to the UK (30%).

Members of the Female Sports Forum and our partners have already made some progress in helping to achieve the target set out in "Sport Matters" through the Women in Sport funding from the Department for Communities to increase the number of women actively participating in sport by 6%. We look forward to seeing that progress continue as we all work together collectively to increase participation levels by women and girls. We are sure that through continued efforts we will see change.

We have confidence that through this strategy, and with the continued dedication of individuals and partner organisations alike, we can influence change to make women and girls playing and working in sport and physical activity an accepted norm in Northern Ireland.

ANGELA PLATT

CHAIR FEMALE SPORTS FORUM



FOREWORD



Sport Northern Ireland have been determined to see more women and girls enjoying and excelling at sport.

Following the success of Sochi 2014, Glasgow 2014 and Rio 2016 we have so many inspiring role models across a number of sports and disciplines to show us that sport can provide a wealth of opportunities for women and girls, from participation to excellence and from coaching and leadership to officiating.

Sport is obviously good for both our physical and mental health; it helps boost our self-confidence and gives us an opportunity to socialise with others. Participating in sport from a young age also helps keep us involved as we get older and as we have so much choice available there is definitely something to suit everyone!

Our challenging target for women's sport by 2019 as established in 'Sport Matters' is to increase the number of women actively participating in sport by 6%; and while we have made some progress towards achieving this, men still participate more than women.

I am delighted that the Female Sports Forum are working together with the five founding sports and a number of partner organisations

to address the key areas identified in consultation with their stakeholders. Collectively we look forward to widening our partnerships and establishing that women and girls participate and excel in sport as standard.

We are committed to working with the Female Sports Forum and our wider sporting sector to make a significant improvement in participation levels.

GEORGE LUCAS

CHAIR SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND



BACKGROUND

The Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) carried out in 2010, highlighted that only 35% of women across Northern Ireland achieve the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity, 5 times a week.

Women's participation in sport peaks in young age groups (16-29 – 43%) and declines with age (50+ - 18%). Participation is significantly greater among women in higher social classes, among those who work or study and women who have a university degree. Women with a disability also participate less than non-disabled women.

On examination of this report it highlighted the main barriers to participation were identified as 'injury' or 'illness' and 'family constraints'.

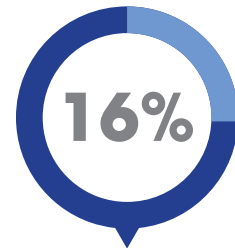
Furthermore, whereas the main motives were health related including 'keeping fit' (not to lose

weight), 'lose weight', 'keep in shape/toned' and 'to relieve stress'. 'Enjoyment' also featured as an important motive.

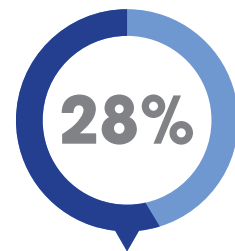
When considering organised sport and events, club membership and participation in competitions female figures were significantly lower than for men.

Our challenge is to eradicate the barriers that have been identified and draw upon all aspects that will enhance the opportunities for participation to occur at all levels.

We believe that working collaboratively and by specifically targeting our efforts on improving and shaping the offer for women and girls to be 'active, fit and sporty' we will increase female participation in sport and physical activity.



16% of female participants have received tuition from a coach or instructor in the past 12 months



28% have attended live sporting events in Northern Ireland as a spectator.

OUR VISION

Our Vision is for every woman and girl across Northern Ireland to feel that participating in sport and being physically active is a vital part of their everyday life.

The Female Sports Forum is committed to increasing female participation in sport and active recreation and ensuring that all females are given the opportunity to take part in sport and active recreation, no matter what their age, ability, race or creed. By participation we mean coaching,

leading, officiating as well as being physically active – by choosing either sport or active recreation.

We are focused on raising the profile of female sport, empowering females to make the choice to be active, in an activity of their choosing.

We want every woman and girl to be **Active, Fit and Sporty.**



OUR AIMS

We believe that our unique collaboration can provide an effective working partnership to make the greatest impact. Our primary aim is to work strategically with a wide range of partners and key stakeholders to raise the profile of women and girls in sport and physical activity in four key areas identified during our consultation process. Specifically targeting the development of female focused campaigns, projects and programmes in these four areas will underpin an increase in participation rates by women and girls across Northern Ireland. The four key areas are:

1. Media - Increasing the visibility of female success

Our consultation findings show that there is a need to focus on raising the profile of women's sport within the media, and celebrate the success of our female athletes. We know that we can use the increased visibility of female success at national and international level to lever growth in community participation. Better use of media will also help eliminate the perceived justification of a 'lack of knowledge or opportunity' as a reason for not being more active.

We will create marketing and communication messages that resonate with our aspiration for females to be Active, Fit and Sporty. Our ambition is to impact on female participation by making the most of social and cultural shifts which show the attractiveness of being healthy, strong and athletic to women and girls.

2. Leadership - Driving cultural change to involve more females in leadership roles

Growing our female participation base needs more coaches, referees, officials and volunteers across all levels of sport and physical activity.

We are particularly interested in the development of our young people as future leaders, innovators and creators of relevant and appealing opportunities for female sport.

It is imperative that we not only strive to increase the workforce but ensure we look after our current workforce, provide opportunities for training and skill development, recognise their ongoing commitment to sport and support through active mentoring programmes.



3. Role Models – Inspiring Role Models can have a significant impact on participation

While some of our best ambassadors and role models are those involved in sport at a high level, we also recognise that identifying and promoting role models from all parts of our society is equally as important – think of your PE teacher, your coach, your friend – all influencers in how active we might or might not be.

We aim to create a network of local and national role models to help connect communities, and work together to address any negative barriers or stereotypes.

4. Research & Evaluation – Providing an evidence base to support extending the reach of sport and physical activity.

We re-affirm the need to carry out appropriate research to determine the female participation rates in sports and physical activities and the barriers preventing women from making the active choice to participate. We also commit to learning from research and evaluation by reviewing and acting on recommendations and research findings by being ready to act.

Our consultation events reinforced the importance of prioritising these 4 key areas and the need to develop an action plan with a research, policy and practice focus to support an increase in female participation. By supporting the creation of new, relevant and innovative ways of packaging and promoting opportunities for being more active – we will make participating in sport and physical activity a more relevant and appealing offer for women and girls.

BE INSPIRED BY...



Tuathlaith Murtagh

*Sports Development Intern
Stranmillis University College*

I became involved in sport through my family, as my cousins were very involved in swimming and water polo clubs across Belfast. This set the foundations for my involvement in sport.

My Degree in Health and Leisure studies gave me the opportunity to study a range of aspects including coaching, sports development, sports psychology, contemporary issues in sport as well as the business management aspect. Sport and physical activity has helped me develop a range of transferable skills which have benefited me throughout my employment and student life. I have developed on my ability to work as part of a team, my time management, organisation as well as my physical development. The social aspect of sport has allowed my confidence to grow and my communication skills to develop. In terms of those already involved in sport, the opportunity for competition can be limited and this is something that

can be developed allowing for more females to compete at elite level. I feel that there should be more press coverage for females in sport. More media coverage could help increase the number of females involved in sport on a long term basis. Funding for females in sport, particularly at a higher level could be more prevalent giving individuals more opportunity to not only compete but succeed at elite level

“The dropout level of females around the age of 15-16 years old is ridiculously high and this is something that can be addressed by working with both schools and communities.”



Katie Mullan

Irish International Hockey Player

Sport has taught me some of the most important life lessons. It has helped me develop values I may not otherwise have and, best of all, it has pushed me way beyond my comfort zone! The friendships I have made are easily some of the best I have.

I have found sport the best release when the pressure comes on academically. During intense study periods I have found my hockey to be a great way to clear my mind and reset. It reduces the stress levels and helps you to apply yourself much better.

I believe that time management and drive are two of the most important factors to being a successful young athlete. You have to be incredibly disciplined to ensure you get the balance right between your

sporting career and work or study. I ensure to dedicate time to close friends and family because they provide the necessary support to help reach your potential.

“Representing your country, the friends I have made and the countries I have got to travel to are the best things about being a sportsperson.”



Alison Rankin

Springwell Running Club

I have been involved in athletics from a very young age, and also played hockey at school. Sport is part of my DNA. My father and mother were both involved in athletics and rugby coaching, and we grew up with the principle of “it’s always good to give back!”

I am a qualified accountant by profession, so that helps in my role as Treasurer. Springwell is a very inclusive club, and one that made me very welcome when I joined. I have made more friends through the club than any other forum, and the team camaraderie is wonderful.

This year I won the Borough Council Sports Administrator of the Year award, and this was a really proud moment for our club. I also played a key role in achieving the ClubmarkNI accreditation for the club, and again this was tremendous for the prestige of Springwell and for building awareness locally.

I love volunteering in sport as you give back a little of what you have received from your peers and elders

through the years. And you get great satisfaction from seeing others benefit from your efforts, be that as a coach, as a treasurer, when we are awarded a grant, or as a race director, when our chosen charity benefits from the race proceeds.

I would highly recommend more females to get involved in volunteering and supporting their local clubs, just give it a go. You will be surprised at how much you will enjoy it, and how much you will get back in “job” satisfaction



Eilish Rutherford

Chair Mary Peters Trust

I have been lucky throughout my life to be involved in sports in various capacities. I was privileged to play hockey for Ireland and winning a Triple Crown in 1977 and an Inter-Continental Cup in 1983 in Kuala Lumpur. I combined my love of sport with my profession as a physiotherapist where I became part of the support team to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team in many games.

Since retiring from the game of hockey I have always been driven to give something back to sport and became involved in the Mary Peters Trust in 1999. I believe the skills and qualities I learned as a team player on the hockey pitch have provided me with the platform to make a positive contribution to the administration of sport. In April 2013 I was delighted to become Chairperson of the Mary Peters Trust which is a challenging but rewarding role. Working

alongside Dame Mary is a fantastic experience and further highlights the hugely important leadership roles that women in sport can play in advancing sports equity.

“Participating in sport enabled me to develop my leadership skills and I am proud to have been selected for and captained Ulster and Ireland Hockey, and playing football for Northern Ireland Ladies.”

OUR ACTION

First Step - Developing Our Future Female Leaders

As part of our commitment to taking positive action, we have developed and delivered a leadership programme for female leaders. We believe that developing the workforce will only occur if educational opportunities are made readily available to women and girls. Our new female leaders are now 'influencers' who can directly influence participation levels within a range of organisations and communities.

Our programme in partnership with Belfast Met was delivered with funding from Sport Northern Ireland's Active Awards for Sport Programme. Graduates from this programme were awarded the ILM Level Award in Leadership and Team Skills and have developed skills in; Communication, Facilitation, Team work, and Leadership & Management.

Benefiting from Big Events

2017 will be a big year for female sport in Northern Ireland, as we look forward to welcoming the IRB Women's Rugby World Cup and the UEFA Women's U19 Tournament. We are working to capitalise from the legacy from these events. Alongside our own local and NI wide events, these international events are an opportunity for our economy, and are an opportunity to inspire more women and girls to adopt a more active lifestyle.

We are also excited by the prospect of enthusing a new generation of girls to participate in sport that will come from hosting the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Games. By working together as a collective, we will maximise the opportunities presented by these larger scale events.

We will work hard to strengthen our sporting club structures, to ensure that all new and returning participants inspired by what they see on the World stage are welcomed, enthused and remain motivated to stay active after the event.



We both love sport and I think having more female coaches will only encourage more young girls to get involved in sport.

We are both studying a HND in Sports Coaching & Development and currently work for councils who lack female coaches. Hopefully after this course we will be better placed to do more coaching in our local areas. The opportunities we have been given through this Leadership Programme will increase our employability through having more sports coaching qualifications and more skills that we can use to encourage more young girls to get involved in sport. We've really enjoyed working with a wide range of girls on the course from a range of different sports from many different backgrounds.

This was our first positive action for change and the 'where to' from here is important for all involved in the world of sport.

Jordan Booth & Tessa King

Belfast Metropolitan College

What you can do to help

Our action plan for active, fit and sporty women and girls across Northern Ireland begins with the launch of a pledge, and asks that organisations developing and delivering physical and sporting activities to commit to making an active and sporty lifestyle an easy choice for 'ALL' women and girls. Signing up to the pledge, demonstrates your commitment to furthering female sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland.

The Pledge will be fulfilled by you committing to delivering activities in our four key areas. It is our intention to ask organisations signed up to the pledge to provide us with annual examples of actions, projects and activities contributing to the four key areas which we will report to the Sport Matters Implementation Group through the Northern Ireland Sports Forum.

OUR PLEDGE

WOMEN & GIRLS: ACTIVE, FIT & SPORTY

This pledge is addressed to all stakeholders of female sport in Northern Ireland. To those District Councils, Governing Bodies of Sport, Sports Clubs, Community and Voluntary Organisations, Universities, Further Education and Higher Education Colleges, Schools and individuals who can directly or indirectly influence female participation in sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland.

All stakeholders of female sport will act as policy makers, engage with females and be role models for female sport; leading to a female population in Northern Ireland who are empowered to make the choice to be Active, Fit and Sporty. There are a number of key actions for change in each of the four key work areas which are detailed below:

- To use media tools to help market and promote awareness of female sports.
- To hold events celebrating female sporting achievements.
- To implement an award and recognition scheme to highlight female achievement in sport.

01
MEDIA

- To engage with educational establishments to develop opportunities for future female leaders.
- To open opportunities for females to gain leadership skills and an appropriate level of leadership experience.

02
LEADERSHIP

- To utilise identified role models in various sporting areas.
- To produce promotional materials to increase the profile of female role models.
- To identify and promote our female role models (ambassadors) across a variety of settings including participation, coaching and officiating, leadership and performance athletes.

03
ROLE MODELS

- To actively contribute to research and evaluation on female participation in sport.
- To help develop and establish baseline figures for participation.
- To identify barriers to participation and develop preventative measures.

04
RESEARCH
& EVALUATION

We commit to taking positive action to make a change for female sport across Northern Ireland. We as a group look forward to working in partnership with all to achieve positive action for change! [Sign the pledge at femalesportsforum.com](https://femalesportsforum.com)

FEMALE
SPORTS FORUM

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