

1. Why be visionary?

If we want to raise sporting aspirations to the same level that secured Bristol the award of 'Green Capital of Europe 2015' and achieved its recognition as one of the UK's leading 'Creative and Cultural' cities, then we must set ourselves apart with bold and distinctive goals. We believe Bristol could be celebrated as the national centre of sport for women and girls.

There is much to celebrate in Bristol already:

- our women's football, hockey, and rugby teams compete in the top flight of their respective Premiership leagues
- individual Bristol women players and athletes compete at the international level, representing England and Wales in football and rugby
- Bristol has more women participating in regular sport than the national average for England.

A vision for 'Sporting Bristol' presents a great opportunity for Bristol to differentiate itself as a true leader in women's sport, promoting and developing the sporting aspirations and achievements of all its citizens.

2. Why have a sporting vision for girls and women in sport?

First is the case for fairness. The women and girls of Bristol deserve the same access and support to compete in sport as their male counterparts, and they should expect the same level of media coverage when they do.

Next is the recognition that women and girls face unique barriers to sport that the men and boys of Bristol do not, which leads to lower participation rates. This has the effect of women missing out on the combination of physical, mental, social and emotional benefits that sport is unique in offering.

Many of the benefits of sport have specific implications for women and girls, including:

Empowerment: learning new skills, greater confidence, and leadership

By competing in sport, individuals must learn new skills and put those skills into practice. Expertise is required to compete and individuals are motivated to improve their performance over time. It's not surprising then to learn that participating in sport from a young age increases confidence, ambitions, team working and leadership skills.

Natasha Henry, editor-in-chief of *Women in Sport* magazine, explains her enjoyment of competing in team sports at school:

[sport] taught me so many skills that have become vital parts of my everyday life as an adult. Teamwork, commitment and, when I became captain, leadership skills¹

As Henry's experience highlights, sport can have wider implications for girls in adulthood, impacting on their employment choices and prospects. Sport can therefore help to address some of the broader issues of women's position in society.

The impact sport may have to women's position in society is echoed by a 2013 Ernst & Young global survey of 821 senior managers and executives which found that 96% of female Chief Executives competed in sport as a child. The survey also found that 55% of female Chief Executives played sport at university level, compared with 39% of other female managers.ⁱⁱ

Girls' participation in sport can challenge and change the social norms about their roles and capabilities, thus enabling girls to operate more equally in society.ⁱⁱⁱ A vision for Bristol of empowered girls and women leaders is surely a vision the city would like to enable.

Emotional and Physical Well-Being

National figures demonstrate that women are twice as likely as men to report symptoms of depression and anxiety. Physical activity is known to help address these symptoms. Thus, increased participation in sport could have a real impact on the number of Bristol women reporting mental health issues.

These health benefits extend to body confidence and self-esteem. Girls and women who regularly participate in sport, and do so from a young age, are less likely to report concerns around confidence, self-esteem and in particular issues with body-image. Many female athletes report having a stronger sense of identity and self-direction – what one researcher has called 'being herself through sport'.^{iv}

Participating in sport also brings social benefits. The Street Games programme, Us Girls, highlights the importance of friendship groups to women participating in sport – friendship being one of the most important factors to participation at all levels.

Women as sports leaders

There is evidence to suggest that within a household women's participation in sport could have a greater impact on family levels of participation. The more women who participate, the more children – boys and girls alike – who are encouraged to do the same.

By focusing our city's sporting vision on increasing girls and women's participation, we will be creating a city of leaders, who feel good about themselves and others, and who offer a sporting role model to others.

3. How are we doing?

Although more women are playing sport, participation levels for women still lag behind their male counterparts:

- Nationally, 40.1% of men play sport at least once a week, compared to 30.5% of women
- The gap in Bristol is less –39.7% men, compared to 34.2% women; A Bristol 'gender gap' of 5.5% compared to a national figure of 9.6%
- The picture is much starker for team sport – nationally, 12% of men play team sport once a week, compared with less than 2% of women^v
- Age and socio-economic group impact on women's participation – rates are lower in disadvantaged communities and decline with age
- Encouragingly, over 50% of women nationally say they want to participate in more sport^{vi}

4. What are the barriers?

Key factors for those women who have positive sporting habits for life include: early positive experiences of sport, and living in 'active households', where they were encouraged, a positive image of sport and sporting role models, including women role models, and high levels of awareness of opportunities available to them to get involved.

Where women and girls don't have active households or encouragement, society fills the gap with cultural norms which emphasise attractiveness over athleticism, compliance over competitiveness, and fitting in over being fit. Thus, whilst there are a number of practical barriers to women's competing in sport, including time and money, the biggest barriers remain cultural.^{vii}

Sport as 'unfeminine'

We live in a culture which promotes women as decorative rather than athletic and encourages unhealthy expectations around women's bodies. These attitudes present a major barrier to women and girls' participation in sport.

- 48% of all girls "believe getting sweaty is not feminine"^{viii}
- Only one girl in four believes it is 'cool' to be sporty. Being popular is not defined by being 'sporty' for girls – but is for boys^{ix}
- One in five men think that women 'being sporty is not feminine'^x
- A third of 18-24 year old women and nearly half of 25-34 year old women feel under greater pressure to be thin than to be healthy^{xi}

In this context, anxiety about body image and appearance is, unsurprisingly, a barrier to sport for many women and girls. Girls and young women who never participate in sport state this as a major reason for their non-participation. Of young women who do participate and later drop out, becoming more self-conscious is listed as one of the reasons.^{xii}

Teenage girls who are sports leaders tend to drop out of this role increasingly at Year 10 and 11 citing body consciousness as one of the factors. This means they are not leading and supporting their peers, but they are also missing out on later taking a lead for their families.

Another cultural factor is pressure from a girls peer group to seek other activities associated with their perceptions of femininity – which does not include sport.^{xiii}

Sporting role models are hidden

The importance of sporting role models was highlighted by Bristol Ladies and England rugby player Sasha Acheson who recently told Bristol Fawcett: 'I think seeing others in sport will create an aspiration or desire for girls to be involved in sport themselves.'^{xiv}

- 43% of all secondary age girls agree that "there aren't many sporting role models for girls"^{xv}

There are a plethora of women sporting role models available – including in Bristol where a number of our teams are at the top of their respective Premiership leagues and where individuals have gone on to play nationally. However, images and stories of these women are rarely seen.

A national study entitled "The weekend as a male entity: how Sunday newspaper sports reporting centres around male activities, interests and language" and published in the journal *Leisure Studies* in 2013 evidences the problem. Between 2008 and 2009 five UK national Sunday newspapers dedicated just 826 (3.6%) articles to sportswomen, compared to the

21,531 (93.8%) devoted to sportsmen.^{xvi} This was a particularly successful period for English sportswomen, especially in male-dominated sports such as football, cricket and rugby, and included the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

The same study also found that of the 761 female photographs accompanying sports articles in the Sunday Times and 396 in the Mail on Sunday, 31% and 22% respectively were non-sports related. Overall, up to a third of photographs of women in the national newspapers were non-sports related – they were usually wives and girlfriends of sportsmen and highlighted female body parts and sexual activity.^{xvii}

To assess the local picture, we analysed one month of sporting coverage in The Bristol Post. Here too the weekend remained a male entity. In October 2013 The Bristol Post weekend editions published zero sporting articles about women and included no photos of women. This is of course on days when the sporting section is the largest. During the week approximately 5% of sports stories included women.

October was a month when Bristol Academy players played nationally in the football World Cup 2015 qualifier. Locally, there were two Premiership League women's rugby matches and two home matches for undefeated Clifton Ladies Hockey. This is in addition to National League basketball matches, a South West Women's League lacrosse tournament, and competitive cyclo-cross, among other sporting fixtures.^{xviii}

Access to expertise

School is seen as the key location where attitudes to sport and physical activity are formed, and where interests and skills are developed. Many girls lack confidence in their skills and abilities and are therefore too embarrassed to participate.^{xix} Girls also don't feel good enough to compete and don't enjoy struggling at sport.^{xx} This suggests that some girls are not receiving the level of training they require to feel confident in their sporting ability.

The experts that are available to coach women and girls are mostly men, which could reinforce the other barriers around sport being seen as unfeminine and the lack of visible female role models. Only 1 in 3 coaches in the UK are women, and only 18% of those hold coaching qualifications.^{xxi} The gap in gender representation widens in elite competition. For example, only 2 of the 43 coaches who travelled with the GB Athletics team to the World Championships this September were women.^{xxii}

Funding and representation in sport

Often cited as the result of less media attention is the lower levels of funding women's sport receives. Perhaps most disheartening is the fact that women's sport receives less than 1% of sports commercial sponsorship.^{xxiii}

Women's representation on National Governing Bodies also falls short. Of the 57 publicly funded National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for sport, 31 fail to meet the current minimum standard of 25 per cent women on their boards, a target set by the government. Six sports boards do not have any female representation at all – among these are British Cycling, British Wrestling, and England Squash & Racketball.^{xxiv}

5. Recommendations

“Imagery, Information and Investment”

- Clare Balding, APPG on Women’s Sport & Fitness, October 2012

The need to take action in the face of the multiple and unique barriers facing women in sport is clear in a number of current, high-profile national initiatives including the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into Women and Sport (more details of this and others at Appendix 1).

This Commission gives us in Bristol a real and significant opportunity to be a leading city in promoting sport for girls and women. The evidence we have summarised here provides sound reasoning for the draft Bristol Strategy for Sport and Active Recreation to clearly identify specific outcomes for girls’ and women’s sport. This must include measurable targets to hold the City to account. The current draft needs strengthening in this area.

Bristol Fawcett have considered the evidence, spoken to a number of key stakeholders and reviewed existing good practice (locally, nationally and internationally). We have taken this evidence into account when devising our ideas of how to make Bristol’s ambitions a reality.

Lead a generation of girls who compete in sport on an equal level as their male peers

Bristol is experiencing a baby-boom, with a rapidly increasing population of under-5s in the city. We should grasp this as an opportunity by committing to an ambitious and long-term target for a generation of sport-loving girls – a tangible legacy from London 2012.

- Increase active female coaches by: targeting financial support at women (including provision for childcare); get women coaches in schools; support a women’s coaching network
- Fund specialist training and resources for more primary school teachers responsible for teaching Physical Education – include information on overcoming the cultural barriers facing girls
- Ensure boys and girls are taught the same sports and that girls are provided with extra skills training, where necessary, to bring their skills level up to that of their contemporaries (i.e. so they don't feel like they 'look silly'^{xv})
- Increase female sporting role models – fund motivational speakers from local sport clubs (such as the successful Bristol Academy Football Club, Clifton Ladies Hockey, or Bristol Ladies Rugby) to speak at assemblies in local schools

Raise the profile of women's sport in Bristol – celebrate women's sporting achievements

- Commit to hosting equal numbers of leading sporting events for women as for men
- Identify a women's sporting event, which Bristol can contribute to making a major sporting event through publicity etc
- Use the influence of the Mayor, Council and other key partners to put pressure on local/regional print, radio, TV and internet based media to deliver greater coverage of girls and women in sport
- Take out a subscription to *Women in Sport* magazine for every primary and secondary school in the city, helping to counter the lack of media coverage in local and national press

Build on the good practice we already have in Bristol to target initiatives for women

We know what works in getting girls and women to participate in sport – there is plenty of evidence from both local and national initiatives. We need to use the data we have, be SMART, be targeted and build on what is already working in the City:

- Us Girls (led by StreetGames) have worked successfully with 16-25 year old women in the most disadvantaged parts of Britain, including Southmead in Bristol
- City of Bristol College is one of just three colleges in a national pilot using the Sports Maker approach to increasing student participation to increase girls in sport
- Projects funded through the Active Women programme of Sport England have focused on Bristol – including StreetGames and Netball in the City
- Investment in new projects should focus on targeted initiatives led from within communities, schools and grassroots sporting clubs

6. Funding Initiatives

Bristol Fawcett is not an expert on the funding streams available, but we are clear that change on this scale requires investment. We suggest possible focuses on:

- Neighbourhood Partnerships to ring-fence investment for small-scale locally-led ‘sports-maker’ type projects that target key underrepresented groups, including girls and women.
- Actively working with Sport England for applications for future investment in Active Women or other women-focused initiatives, to ensure Bristol is a city-leader.
- Exert influence on National Governing Bodies to make sure initiatives and investment in Bristol targets girls and women.

Appendix One

National Action

The Sport Commission may wish to refer to other organisations nationally who have recognised need for action to raise the profile of women's sport, promote better coverage of women's sport in the media and increase participation, by reducing the barriers to participation:

- The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women's Sport and Fitness¹, supported by the continuing work of the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation²
- July 2013 the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee announced an inquiry into Women and Sport³
- Following the evaluation of the £10 million invested in Active Women⁴, Sport England are now running a £2.3 million, year-long pilot in Bury⁵ to encourage more women in the town to play sport – by seeking for the first time to create an environment in which women and girls doing sport is seen as the norm, rather than the exception.
- Women's Sport Trust⁶ established in 2013, to build on the Olympic legacy for women

¹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/womens-sport-and-fitness.htm>

² <http://www.wsff.org.uk/>

³ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/women-and-sport/>

⁴ <http://www.getoxfordshireactive.org/page.asp?section=1754§ionTitle=Active+Women>

⁵ <http://www.sportengland.org/media-centre/news/2013/may/10/bury-chosen-for-womens-sport-town-take-over/>

⁶ <http://www.womenssporttrust.com/>

About Us

Bristol Fawcett⁷ is the local group of The Fawcett Society⁸. Fawcett is the UK's leading campaigning organisation for women's equality and rights – at home, at work and in public life. Since our founder's successful parliamentary campaign for the women's vote we have continued to keep women's rights on the political agenda and in the public eye. Bristol Fawcett members are volunteers who are active in the vibrant local campaign for gender equality.

We support the aims of the Fawcett Society and work at a local level to:

- Raise awareness of Fawcett and the work that Fawcett does
- Campaign and lobby to improve policy and services for women and girls
- Bring an informed gender equality perspective to local decision making bodies

In 2013 we began a project looking at Women and Sport. The objectives of this project are:

1. To improve the coverage and visibility of women's sport and sportswomen
2. To support and promote sport for girls and women
3. To challenge gendered assumptions about women's sport

So far we have launched Sport Watch Bristol⁹ – a fixtures calendar and blog. The concept of Sport Watch Bristol is simple – we provide up to date listings of women's sporting events in Bristol and invite everyone to show up and support.

You can also follow us on Twitter @SportWatch_

Sport Watch Bristol project is led by Nicola Waterworth and Nicola Garwood.

Nicola Waterworth grew up with an Olympic athlete and world record holder for a granddad but was disengaged from sport at school. Physical education lessons felt like an afterthought, unless it was football or basketball. 'Discovering' competitive sport in her early thirties through triathlon, Nicola is now a passionate advocate for the power of sport to have positive influences on women's lives, and wanting all girls to see their sporting potential at a younger age. Nicola is now an Area Coordinator for British Cycling's Breeze programme and is training to be a Level 2 Cycling Coach.

Nicola's female sporting role models include: a friend who is the 500m sprint track cycling world champion in the 55+ age-group, her grandmother who plays 18 holes of golf 3 times a week in her mid-80s and every other woman who is achieving something that is awesome in sport for them.

Nicola Garwood grew up in Canada where girls and boys were taught the same sports at school and practised the same skills – whether that be kicking a football, dribbling a basketball, or hitting a baseball. Sport was a central feature of state education and was funded accordingly. Competing in sport was seen by girls as 'a good thing' and was linked to popularity. After spending nearly ten years in England, Nicola remains surprised by the pervasive cultural barriers to sport for girls and women. Like everyone else in the country, she was captivated by the London 2012 Olympics and hopes its legacy acts as a catalyst, inspiring Bristol to focus on closing the gender gap in sport.

⁷ www.bristolfawcett.org.uk

⁸ www.fawcettsociety.org.uk

⁹ <http://sportwatchbristol.wordpress.com/>

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ⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/26/women-in-sport-raise-profile> Natasha Henry “If we want more women in sport, we must raise their profile”

ⁱⁱ http://www.ey.com/US/en/Newsroom/News-releases/News_Global-survey-reveals-critical-role-sports-play-for-female-executives

ⁱⁱⁱ World Health Organisation: GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS: BENEFITS, PATTERNS, INFLUENCES AND WAYS FORWARD R. Bailey, I. Wellard and H. Dismore, Centre for Physical Education and Sport Research.

^{iv} World Health Organisation: GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS: BENEFITS, PATTERNS, INFLUENCES AND WAYS FORWARD R. Bailey, I. Wellard and H. Dismore, Centre for Physical Education and Sport Research.

^v Women and Informal Sport, Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2011

^{vi} Women and Informal Sport, Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2011

^{vii} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/249/249/1199520df/original/itstime_final.pdf WSFF “It’s Time: Future forecasts for women’s participation in sport and exercise”

^{viii} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/110/110/61d4370a1/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final_0.pdf

^{ix} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/110/110/61d4370a1/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final_0.pdf

^x http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/249/249/1199520df/original/itstime_final.pdf WSFF “It’s Time: Future forecasts for women’s participation in sport and exercise”

^{xi} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/249/249/1199520df/original/itstime_final.pdf WSFF “It’s Time: Future forecasts for women’s participation in sport and exercise”

^{xii} Understanding participation in sport: What determines sports participation among 15-19 year old women? Sport England Research January 2006
<http://www.sportengland.org/media/39365/understanding-participation-among-15-19-year-old-girls-summary-report.pdf>

^{xiii} World Health Organisation: GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS: BENEFITS, PATTERNS, INFLUENCES AND WAYS FORWARD R. Bailey, I. Wellard and H. Dismore, Centre for Physical Education and Sport Research.

^{xiv} <http://sportwatchbristol.wordpress.com/2013/10/17/acheson-england-and-bristol-ladies-rugby/>

^{xv} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/110/110/61d4370a1/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final_0.pdf

^{xvi} Amy Godoy-Pressland. The weekend as a male entity: how Sunday newspaper sports reporting centres around male activities, interests and language (2008 and 2009). Leisure Studies, 2013 : 1 DOI:[10.1080/02614367.2013.833286](https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2013.833286)

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^{xix} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/110/110/61d4370a1/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final_0.pdf

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^{xxi} Statistic cited at Women Play Sport 2013 conference, 8th November 2013

^{xxii} <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2013/sep/04/athletics-female-coaches>

^{xxiii} House of Commons Debate, 14th February 2013,
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130214/debtext/130214-0001.htm>

^{xxiv} <http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/general/others/womens-sport-calls-for-more-female-chiefs-8930916.html>

^{xxv} http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/110/110/61d4370a1/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final_0.pdf