

Case Study: This Girl Can in Herts School Festival



Introduction

On Wednesday 23rd March 2022, the Herts Sports Partnership, the Herts School Games Organisers and the Youth Sport Trust collaborated to create the first ever This Girl Can in Herts Schools Festival.

Project Background

Women in Sport found that 43% of teenage girls who once considered themselves 'sporty', disengage from sport after primary school. Acknowledging that fears included being judged by others, a lack of confidence, pressures of schoolwork and not feeling safe outside, the Partnership wanted to offer a fun, friendly and female-only event that used sport and physical activity as a tool to address these issues.

Implementation

Year 7 pupils from eight different schools in Hertfordshire were invited to Wodson Park for a full day of physical activity and fun. The schools in attendance also invited two older pupils to act as peer mentors. These pupils benefitted from the opportunity to increase their leadership skills and will continue to assist the younger girls when they return to their school setting. Double Olympian Montell Douglas, who is also a Youth Sport Trust Athlete Mentor, joined the day and kickstarted it by discussing her impressive athletic career with the aim to inspire the girls, before leading one of three workshops which focused on team building, leadership, and physical activity.



"We had a fantastic day at the This Girl Can in Herts Schools Festival where I've loved seeing the growth from the girls throughout the day, and also seeing their confidence blossom alongside the friendships they've made during the activities. I hope this is a day that they won't forget soon and possibly be the start of their own active journeys."

Montell Douglas, Olympian and Youth Sport Trust Athlete Mentor

Inclusion

98 girls were specifically selected by their teachers to attend the festival, due to not engaging with sport and physical activity at school. Staff were advised to also bring along pupils who showed a lack of self-confidence and poor communication and social skills, as the festival workshops were designed to tackle some of these issues, using sport and physical activity as a tool for positive change. Two older pupils from each school also experienced peer mentoring for the first time, learning valuable leadership skills that they could take back to school.

Partnership Working

- Hertfordshire School Games Organisers
- Youth Sport Trust
- Sports Leaders from The John Warner School
- Sport England's This Girl Can campaign
- Wodson Park Sports and Leisure Centre
- University of Hertfordshire Students

Physical Activity Outcomes

On arrival, the two peer mentors created a poster for their school, and all the girls were asked to rate their confidence. This activity was repeated at the end of the day with 82% of participants reporting that they felt more confident towards physical activity by the end of the festival. The Head of PE at Loreto College in St Albans summed up the day by saying: "there was a good range of activities which all encouraged teamwork and communication. It's nice for the girls to interact with new people from across the county, and for them to be led by other young people."

Learnings

In the feedback session all the participants were asked to identify barriers that they experience which prevent them from being active. Comments such as: scared of judgement / failure, lack of time, disliking the changing rooms, being disheartened when not being selected for a team and risk of injury were all discussed. Sport England's This Girl Can campaign aims to address these themes, and whilst these are not new to the sector, the feedback suggests that there is still work to be done to prevent them from continuing. However, one of the participants stated that from attending the festival she "learnt teamwork and that you have to trust people around you." Given this, we know that the festival has started to create some positive sport and physical activity experiences for these young girls and the Partnership will continue to develop opportunities for Women and Girls in Hertfordshire.

Sustainability

The This Girl Can in Herts School Festival will kickstart additional female provision back at the eight schools in the form of 'This Girl Can Clubs'. These will be supported by funding from the Herts Sports Partnership and the School Games Commonwealth Legacy Fund.

