

TAKE ACTION

How to Level the Playing Field
for Girls in Community Sport

1. Challenge stereotypes

Everyone has the power to recognise and challenge stereotypes. Use all opportunities to identify and crush stereotypes within the club community. Unpick any limiting assumptions and biases you hear expressed by coaches, children and parents and carers. Use language, scenarios and role models to show sport is just as important for girls as boys. Train coaches and staff on how to actively challenge gender stereotypes.

2. Language - change the narrative

We are all affected by stereotyping, but we don't always recognise how this affects our language. We often use different language with girls and boys according to our gendered expectations. We need to learn a new language in which girls are expected to be good at sport and confident in themselves. We need to talk in a way that allows boys to express vulnerability meaningfully, and to challenge their peers if they are excluding girls.

Using the right language consistently is vital. With this we can reset expectations and change the story for girls.

3. Close the gender skills gap

As a result of stereotyping and lack of opportunity more girls than boys will lack sporting skills. They can build them quickly though, and this should be a priority for every coach and sports provider. Instil a growth mindset: all skills can be learnt, practised, and mastered. Provide opportunities for girls to address any skills gaps in a supportive, planned way. Communicate why girls may need more investment in their skills, explaining the underlying reasons for this to children, parents, and carers.



4. Recognise and celebrate girls and women

It is important for all children to see girls and women succeed and enjoy sport. Consider the coaches in the sporting environment – are there enough female role models for young girls, as well as positive male role models for boys? Create an environment which makes it practical for women and girls to take up leadership and coaching roles. Are men doing an equal amount of organisational and support roles? Give profile to amazing female role models in and around the environment and celebrate female athletes equally to men.

5. Work with parents and carers

Parents and carers of children are essential to achieving gender equality in the club. Their behaviours towards both girls and boys and other adults on and off the pitch greatly affect the culture of the club and with this, children's experiences.

Help families understand stereotyping and how their attitudes affect girls' experiences of sport. Communicate the clubs' commitment to a positive equal environment for girls, and the expectation for families to uphold this. Hold information evenings to share club values. Use coaching sessions and matches to model what good sport can look like for girls and how children can be mutually supportive.

6. Commit to gender equality and allyship

Boys can learn to be allies from a young age if they are helped to understand why sport matters for girls as much as boys. We need to help boys to understand that being an ally for girls is part of being a sportsman, and with this a good person. Any negative attitudes towards girls in sport must be challenged in a helpful way.

Equal opportunities, equal participation and equal recognition will help fuel male allyship. This is vital if girls and women are to enjoy better sporting futures.

