



Breaking Barriers Toolkit – Section Three

Empowering disabled teenage girls



In partnership with:

Disabled teenage girls want to be heard. This section of the Breaking Barriers toolkit explores how to meaningfully empower them and include their voices in the planning and delivery of sport and exercise offers. By including disabled teenage girls' perspectives, we can create more inclusive and engaging experiences that truly resonate with them.

Top tips for empowering disabled teenage girls:

1. Interactive feedback

Use creative ways to gather disabled teenage girls' input in a way that feels comfortable for them. For example, using cards with emojis on them which girls could pick to say how they feel about different topics.

2. Safe and familiar space

Talk with disabled teenage girls in a space they know and feel comfortable in e.g. at their school or at a youth group they attend. Meet in a familiar environment like their school or youth group to build trust and encourage open communication.

3. Value their ideas

Show disabled teenage girls their input is valued by providing feedback on how their ideas were used and showcase past examples of activities shaped by their suggestions.

4. Keep it concise

Forms or surveys should be short in length and take less than 15 minutes to complete. Where possible, presenting questions and allowing responses to be provided in different formats, can enable more girls, including those with different learning abilities, to engage. Options could include, for example, the use of visuals or ratings, rather than relying on written responses.

5. Build rapport

Invest time into building a rapport with the girls you are speaking with. For example, if you are speaking to girls who don't consider themselves sporty, don't start with questions about sport. Instead, find common ground to create a connection.

Principles for Success

Women in Sport's Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls research identified eight core Principles for Success which can be used by providers to evaluate and enhance sport and exercise offers aimed at teenage girls.

For this project, based on our research findings, we have chosen four of the principles which we feel should be prioritised for disabled teenage girls. Use these principles when planning or delivering sessions for disabled teenage girls.

1. No judgement

Take the pressure off, don't focus on performance and give teenage girls the freedom to simply play. For example, during a session, encourage the group to create their own scoring system or introduce their own rules. This allows girls to be creative and gives them the freedom to explore different ways of playing a game.

2. Invoke excitement

Bring a sense of adventure and discovery to your activities. For example, empower the girls to get creative and use games and challenges, such as using the latest TikTok songs, as part of a yoga routine.

3. Give girls a voice and choice

Help girls to feel empowered by giving them choice and control. For example, when running a session, give girls different drills or activities to choose from. Listen to their views and make a group decision on which drill or activity to do.

4. Open eyes to what's there

Redefine sport as more than school sport. When planning sessions for disabled teenage girls, talk with them and propose a range of activities to try or choose from. These should include activities that you wouldn't normally see in schools.

Useful resources

To learn more about disabled teenage girls attitudes toward sport and exercise, please click on the links below:

- [Access Sport, Breaking Barriers: Supporting Disabled Teenage Girls to be Active Research Project 2024](#)
- [Women in Sport – A Guide to Applying the 8 Principles for Success](#)
- [This Girl Can – Studio You](#)
- [Every Body Moves, Disability Inclusive Activity Finder](#)

For gathering interactive feedback, please explore the links below:

- [Printable emoji flashcards](#)
- [Makaton Feedback Form](#)
- [Makaton Signs and Symbols](#)
- [Youth Sport Trust – Youth Voice Tool Kit](#)

Good practice

Here are some great examples of how organisations empower disabled teenage girls. Click on the links below to find out more.

- [Participation People – Youth voice training to help you young women stay active for life with the Sweaty Betty Foundation](#)
- [Access Sport – Youth Voice Webinar](#)

There are also some great examples of applying Women in Sport's Eight Principles for Success. Click on the links below to find out more.

- [Women in Sport – Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls Tackling Teenage Disengagement](#)
- [UK Deaf Sport – Supporting Deaf Girls to Stay Active in their Teenage Years and Beyond](#)

