



**First Minister's National Advisory
Council on Women and Girls**

Website Summary
October 2018 Spotlight: Gender and Sport

**WE WANT TO BRING
GENDER
EQUALITY
TO EVERY COMMUNITY
ACROSS SCOTLAND**

**#GENERATION
EQUAL**



YOU SAID – WE LISTENED

In October 2018 we invited public feedback on the Spotlight topic of gender equality and sport. We'd like to give a huge thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas.

A full report has been given to the NACWG, and a summary version is shared below.

Please note: these reports summarise the responses received to this open call for submissions. They do not represent the views of the National Advisory Council on women and Girls (we are seeking feedback to gain more insight) nor do they represent a majority view or the view of the Scottish population. They represent the views of those organisations or individuals who have chosen, proactively, to respond.

Who did we hear from?

We had a great response and heard from both individuals and 'Wee Circle' discussions.

We heard from a range of genders, ethnicities, religions, ages, as well as from people with a disability.

WE ASKED THREE QUESTIONS:

- Q1** WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST EQUALITY ISSUES, IN SCOTLAND, AROUND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT?
- Q2** WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, IN SCOTLAND, TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT?
- Q3** WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD NACWG RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT, IN SCOTLAND?

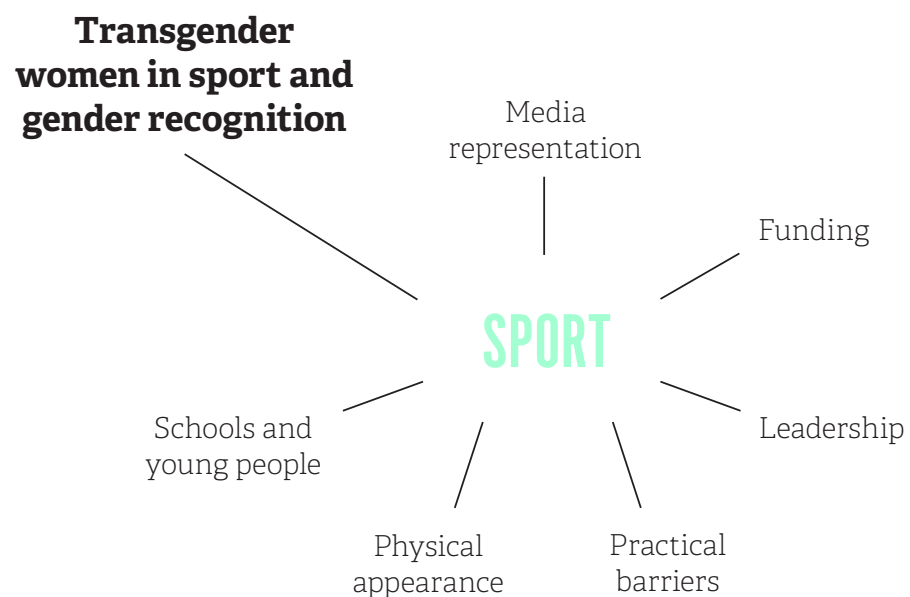


WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Feedback covered 'participation' in sport, and physical activity in general, as well as higher-level, competitive sport.

Seven headline themes emerged – though it was notable that 60% of the individual responses, and six out of eight 'Wee Circle' responses focused on issues and actions around the potential impact of gender self-recognition on women and girls in sport.

Headline themes are summarised in the diagram below:





MAIN ISSUES



1.

MEDIA REPRESENTATION

Respondents highlighted a lack of coverage of women's sports by the media, resulting in a lack of role models, and contributing to the 'vicious circle' of unequal funding, sponsorship, pay, prize money etc. Lack of coverage of women's disability sport was also raised. Respondents criticised the media's emphasis on appearance regarding women in sport. Increasing the number of women sports journalists, positive role models, and pushing for more equal coverage was suggested.



2. FUNDING

Respondents highlighted gender equality across a number of financial measures: funding, sponsorship, prize-money, high-level competitive training and travel, and grass-roots / community provision. Regulation and legislation were suggested, where feasible (e.g. equal pay, funding from the government, equal funding for elite athletes).



3. LEADERSHIP

Respondents called for more women at the top of sports organisations. They also called for more young women to be encouraged into coaching, and into careers in sport. It was felt existing safeguarding work (e.g. FA Safeguarding Manager) might benefit from a gendered lens. Feedback also called for sports teachers and leaders to be more aware of issues around mental health, body positivity, and diversity.

Feedback also called for strong leadership on 'zero tolerance' policies on sexism, as has been done around racism and sectarianism.



4. PRACTICAL BARRIERS

A wide range of issues were highlighted. Suggested action included: Making sure transport links are in place to enable women to access sport facilities; more 'life stage-appropriate' opportunities (e.g. pregnancy, post-natal, post-menopause); lessening financial barriers; making sure the public environment is safe for women to exercise in; single-sex sports options for Muslim girls; 'girls only' beginner or taster classes; crèche facilities at leisure centres, or opportunities for families to exercise together. Overall, feedback called for more women to be involved in decision-making.



5. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Feedback highlighted numerous ways that overemphasis on women's appearance creates barriers to participation, and to being 'taken seriously' in high-level sport; from the inflated cost of 'fashionable' sport clothing; to concerns over body shape; to the sexualisation of female sports stars; to teenage girls dropping out. Respondents wanted to see more 'calling out' of unequal or sexist media reporting, and overemphasis on physical appearance, clothing, and 'sex appeal' of sports women. Feedback called for more campaigns like Sport England's 'This Girl Can' – breaking down barriers about appearance, and celebrating all forms of activity. Feedback suggested promoting sport and physical activity as part of a broader topic including positive mental health, friendship, and positive body image. Feedback also called for removing barriers to participation connected to appearance (e.g. lack of free hairdryers).



6. SCHOOLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Many people reflected on why girls drop out of sport after primary school or during their teenage years. Feedback highlighted a range of issues, from the variety of sports opportunities available in schools; to changing facilities; to school uniforms; to periods; to overemphasis on 'competition' versus physical activity and sport for mental health and friendship.

Suggested actions included: exposure to a wide variety of sports from an early age; investment in coaching; addressing barriers within schools (facilities, uniforms etc); linking sport to mental health, friendship and positive body image; lessening financial barriers to extra-curricular or holiday activities; investment in free playparks.



7.

TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN SPORT AND GENDER SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Concerns around the impact of gender self-identification on sport fell into four clear categories – all of which were thought likely to reduce women's participation in sport, at every level.

- Fairness: when transgender women and girls are allowed to compete for women's medals, prizes, sports scholarships etc. – given biological advantages.
- Physical safety: when transgender women and girls play alongside women and girls, given physical differences.
- Changing rooms and showers: unease, and perceived safety risks at predatory men taking advantage of gender self-identification to access women's changing rooms and shower areas. Particular concern around parents/children, Muslim women, and women with traumatic experience.
- Funding: if women's already smaller 'share of the pie' has to be divided up further to support transgender women – rather than more money becoming available.

Some feedback contained a strong rejection of the principle of gender self-identification. Other feedback included suggestions for equitable solutions that would protect and increase participation by everyone. This included measures around changing areas, and competition categories.

The UK Government's Consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act (covering England and Wales) ended on 22nd October, and is likely to have had some influence on the feedback NACWG received in October.



THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback – it is valuable.

We'd love as many people as possible to share their ideas on our next Spotlight topic. We have a new one every month.