Inclusive Schools, Active Girls – strategic slide set to support conversations in schools around inclusive kit

Key Stats

- Only 45% of girls aged 5-18 years achieve the recommended levels of daily physical activity.
- Research shows that the onset of puberty is the point at which girls' enjoyment of and engagement in PE declines significantly
- The two most reported barriers to participation are:
  - 36% of girls say menstruation as a barrier.
  - 30% lack confidence in their own sporting ability.
- 55% of girls would prefer to attend school wearing their PE kit on PE days, with 66% believing this would make them more physically active.

Menstruation and Physical Activity

Research also highlights several barriers associated with menstruation that affect participation and attendance:

- Many girls don’t want to exercise during their period, despite evidence showing that physical activity can help reduce pain, cramping and discomfort while also providing a positive distraction from symptoms.
- Some girls truant PE lessons or school altogether because of their period.
- Students may refuse to change for PE because they are concerned that others will see their sanitary products.
- Worries about leaking during activity can make girls reluctant to wear skorts, with many preferring leggings or tracksuit bottoms.

Women in Sport – Fit to Learn

The Fit to Learn pilot, led by Women in Sport and supported by United Learning and the Youth Sport Trust, ran across 12 schools and found that allowing pupils to wear their PE uniform on PE days had a significant impact on girls' experiences of PE and physical activity. Key findings:

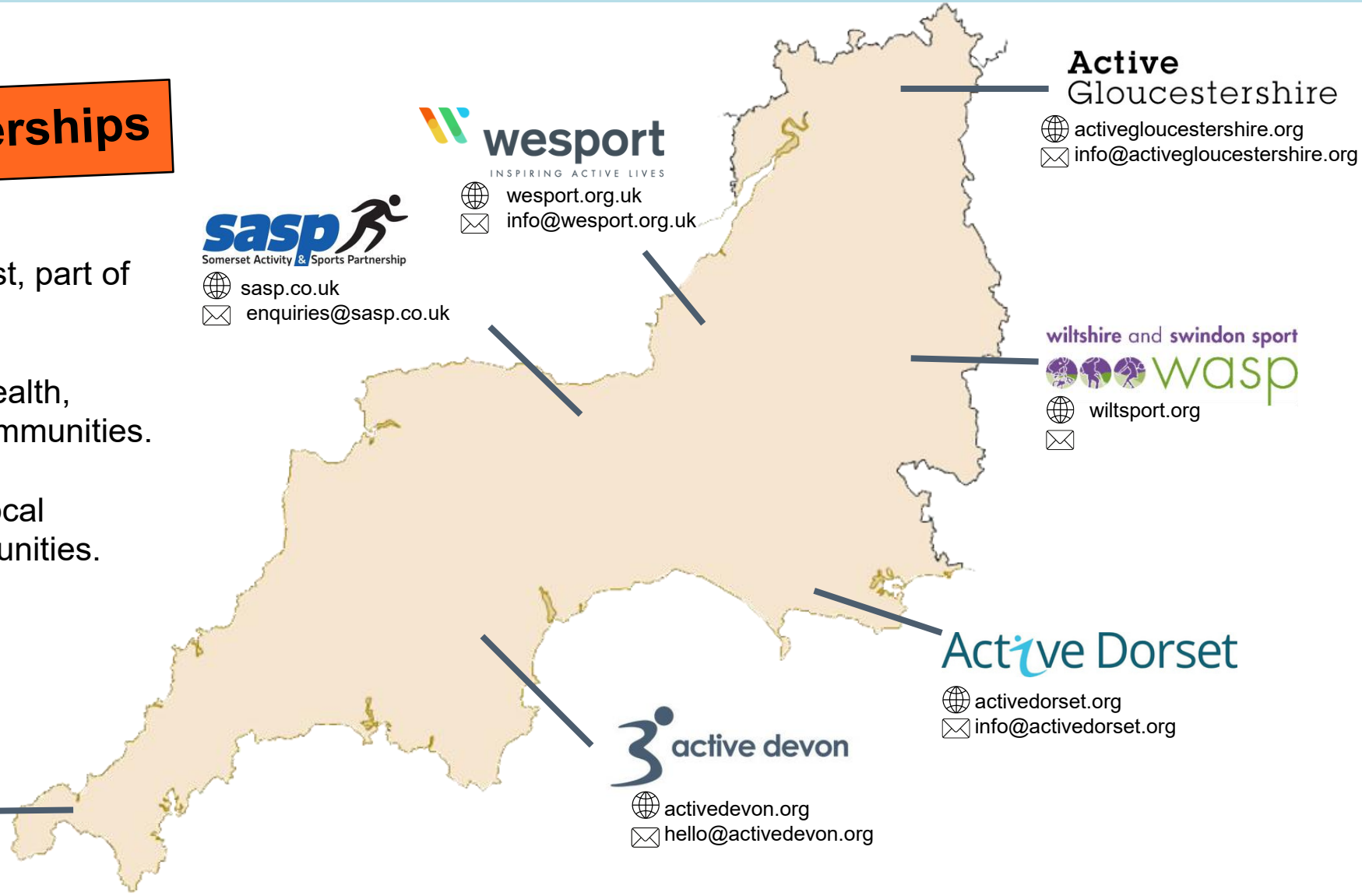
- 63% of girls felt it was easier to take part in PE when on their period
- 59% of girls said it created more opportunities for them to be active throughout the school day
- 45% of girls said it made them more active on their journeys to and from school
- 30% of girls felt less stressed and anxious
- Around 7 in 10 pupils and PE teachers wanted the policy to continue
- 75% of teachers said it saved 'a lot of time'

Report here: Fit to Learn, Free to Play - Women in Sport Charity

Engage with your local Active Partnership around to understand more about the physical activity opportunities in your local area.

South West Active Partnerships

- 7 Active Partnerships in the South West, part of a network of 40 organisations.
- Movement is the foundation of good health, wellbeing, and thriving, sustainable communities.
- Each Active Patnership understands local people, local barriers, and local opportunities.



Active Gloucestershire
activegloucestershire.org
info@activegloucestershire.org

wesport
INSPIRING ACTIVE LIVES
wesport.org.uk
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sasp
Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership
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Active Dorset
activedorset.org
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Office for Health Improvement & Disparities

Wendy Taylor, National Manager - Women and Girls, Youth Sports Trust

What it's really like for girls in 2025

The Current Landscape

Girls enjoyment of PE declines as they become older.

- **56%** of girls aged **14-15** enjoy PE vs **86%** of girls aged **7-8**. Youth Sport Trust, Girls Active, 2024

Confidence stops girls being more active at school.

- **46%** of girls aged **14-15** report a lack of confidence stops them being more active at school compared with **26%** of girls aged **7-8**. Youth Sport Trust, Girls Active, 2024

What do we want for girls in PE

- More girls, more active
- Feeling safe and having a sense of belonging
- Supported, confident and empowered
- To have and be, positive role models
- Their voices to be heard
- For PE to meet the needs of all girls

About the Girls Active Survey

The survey highlights what life is like for girls in 2025. Surveys conducted for key stages 2-5, with insights on physical activity and barriers.

It explores:

- Physical activity, sport, PE and learning
- Changes and trends in PE, sport and physical activity trends
- Motivations and barriers
- Body Image and PE kit
- Wellbeing, resilience and belonging

Girls Active Survey



Girls Active Report 2025



Girls Active Getting Started



2025 key findings

Positives to build on:

- **78%** of girls like taking part in **physical activity.**

- Top 3 motivations for girls remain consistent:
  - having fun
  - being with friends
  - getting fit and healthy

- **88%** of girls **understand why** being active is good for them.

Secondary-aged girls barriers to being more active in school:

- When I have my period
- I am not confident
- I don't like being watched
- Being outside when it's not nice weather
- PE kit - Only **28%** of girls feel **confident** and just **38%** feel **comfortable** wearing their PE or sports kit.

Together we can change the game

Opportunities to better support girls:

- **77%** of girls want **flexibility** around PE days - whether that's wearing PE kit all day, changing after PE, or switching from uniform to kit for the rest of the day

Girls Active principles of effective practice:

- Take a **long-term** approach to engaging girls.
- Put devleoping **self-confidence** at the heart of PE.
- Make PE and sport **relevant** to girls' lives.
- Recognise the power of **friends** to drive progress.
- Develop **role models** for the future.
- **Empower girls** to design and deliver PE and sport.

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities

Tess Howard, MBE, GB Women's Hockey Player
Inclusive schools, Active Girls - Policy Leadership & practical tools to reduce barriers and enable every girl to move.

Who is Tess Howard?

GB Hockey Olympian, academic, and founder of **Inclusive Sportswear**. Tess is an advocate for **choice and inclusion in sports kit policy** to improve participation and enjoyment for girls.



Personal Journey & Context

Hockey traditionally required skirts, with no choice for players.
Tess shared her discomfort wearing skirts throughout her career, even at elite level.
Injury (ACL rupture before Tokyo Olympics) gave her time to research and campaign for change.

Historical Perspective

Women's sports uniforms historically designed to affirm femininity (e.g., Victorian tennis outfits).
Despite progress, gendered kit norms persisted into modern times (e.g., compulsory skirts in hockey).

Research findings and evidence

Tess Howards dissertation explored **impact of gendered uniforms on girls' participation in PE**.

Equalities Act loophole: Differences in dress requirements for boys and girls are standard and not considered discriminatory. Current PE kit policy focuses on practicality and affordability but **lacks choice and inclusion**.

Survey of 400 women revealed:

- 64% of girls drop out of sport by age 16, and 1/3 cite kit as a reason.
- Common issues: lack of choice, body-consciousness, period concerns.
- Girls want: choice, comfort, female body consideration, dark bottoms, leggings, tracksuits.

Why act now?

Children's Wellbeing in Schools Bill (Sept 2026) will require policy refresh.

New School Uniform Guidance (Nov 2025)
Schools must offer choice of items, promote sports bras, and ensure kit enables participation and inclusion.

Free guidance and resources - Inclusive Sportswear Platform
Policy templates, expert guidance, PE kit reviews, action plans.

Champion School Process:

Pledge to the Charter.
Review current kit policy.
Implement changes and submit evidence.
Receive certification as an Inclusive Sportswear Champion School.

“Fix the kit, give them choice, and they’ll stay to play.”
Change is possible and impactful—schools can start now using free resources.

Links and Resources

Period Education | Menstrual cycle education teachers
Webinar 1 recording and slides: Inclusive Schools, Active Girls – focus on PE uniform as a barrier
Inclusive Sportswear charity website: free tools and resources
Fix the Kit campaign – Hero Film
Fix the Kit campaign – Teachers: Why Join the Campaign
Fix the Kit campaign – Teenage Girls: Why it matters to them
Women in Sport – Fit to Learn, Free to Play research
Treasure Your Chest – Breast health educational resources
Girls Active: Getting Started - Youth Sport Trust - Online training modules
Girls Active Participation Survey - Youth Sport Trust - Girls Active participation survey
Girls Active National Reports 2025 - Youth Sport Trust - Girls Active national reports 2025: