



## Not A One Hit Wonder

A guide to increasing the retention of women at activity sessions

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## Who is this guide for?

This practical guide has been designed to help those involved in the sector who want to engage women in sport, and increase their retention.

It contains insight gathered from women, looking at the barriers to and the motivations for continuing to attend physical activity sessions.

These transferable learnings can be applied in a variety of scenarios to make it more likely that women will keep coming back to the sessions.



## What is this guide based on?

For this guide, Women in Sport reviewed insight gathered as part of our collaboration with the Get Out Get Active (GOGA) Wrexham programme, targeting inactive disabled and non-disabled women. The insight reviewed for this guide:

**1. A survey of 180 women spread across 12 different GOGA sports/activities.**

- 77% of the women surveyed were between 31-64 years of age
- 29% of survey respondents reported having a life limiting illness or impairment that lasted, or was expected to last, 12 months or more
- 40% of completed surveys were by women who were 'lapsed participants' (no longer regularly attending GOGA Wrexham sessions)

**2. Observations of GOGA Wrexham sessions, 2 group discussions with participants, 13 in depth interviews (5 with current participants and 8 with lapsed participants).**

**3. A 'solutions' workshop consisting of 13 women from across a range of GOGA Wrexham activities, and a mix of current and lapsed participants.**

**Get Out Get Active (GOGA)** is a Spirit of 2012 funded programme, that aims to engage the very least active disabled and non-disabled people in activity together. Delivered over 18 localities in the UK and supported by a network of national partners, the programme delivers fun and genuinely inclusive activities to those that can benefit most from being more active. To find out more please visit [www.getoutgetactive.co.uk](http://www.getoutgetactive.co.uk)



## About GOGA Wrexham

During the insight gathering phase, GOGA Wrexham ran over 250 sessions engaging over 700 women in a range of sports and physical activity, from walking netball to golf tasters. For the majority of women attending GOGA Wrexham, this was their first experience of exercise for a long time.



**FREE weekly Walking Netball sessions are coming to Wrexham**  
**Starting Wednesday 7th February 2018, 1-2pm**  
**In Hightown Resource Centre, Fusilier Way, LL13 7TL**

No booking required. For more information please contact:  
 Robin at the Caia Park Health Team - 03000 859 625  
 Terri at the Active Wrexham Team - 01978 297362




**Ladies Night**  
**MONDAY NIGHT IS LADIES NIGHT!**  
 FREE SESSIONS AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL LEISURE AND ACTIVITY CENTRES STARTING MONDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY FOR 10 WEEKS.

**QUEENSWAY STADIUM 01978 355826**  
 0-5k Walk to Run Session  
 On the track from 7:30-8:30pm  
 (Book in advance to confirm your place)

**GYM SESSION 6:30-8:30pm**  
 (Induction Included)

**WATERWORLD 01978 297300**  
 Gym Session 6:30-8:30pm  
 (Induction Included)

Ladies only swimming 8:00-9:30pm

**GWYN EVANS 01978 269540**  
 Gym Session 7:00-8:00pm  
 Ladies only swimming 8:00-9:00pm

**CHIRK 01691 778666**  
 Aquafit 7:15-8:00pm  
 Clubbercise 7:30-8:15pm

**FREE LEISURE CARD!**

For further enquiries or bookings, please contact Terri Ritchie:  
 01978 297362 @GOGAWrexham terri.ritchie@wrexham.gov.uk




**LADIES GOLF TASTER SESSIONS**  
 Morgyn Llwyd High School  
 (First Four Weeks)

Tuesdays  
 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Suitable for beginners  
 Inclusive for all abilities  
 Indoor Equipment Provided  
 Book to secure your place  
 First four weeks FREE

Five further weeks at:  
 Wrexham Golf Club - £5 a Session

For further enquiries or bookings please contact:  
 Terri Ritchie | 01978 297362 | @GOGAWrexham  
 terri.ritchie@wrexham.gov.uk



“Fitness and exercise can be quite male dominated and scary and very often it’s about what kit you’ve got.”

## What are the barriers stopping women getting active?

Our insight found the GOGA activities appealed to women because the sessions addressed their barriers to being active. Women reported their barriers included:

### Experience barriers

- Worry about being a beginner.
- Fear of being unfit or out of your depth in a room full of ‘sporty’ people.
- Fear of failure or making a fool of yourself.
- A feeling that fitness/sports environments are male dominated.

### Opportunity barriers

- The cost of joining and not knowing if you will use it.
- Where to start and what to do - the choice can be overwhelming so never get started.
- Not knowing what activity would suit and then having to pay upfront.
- Fitting it around family or life commitments.

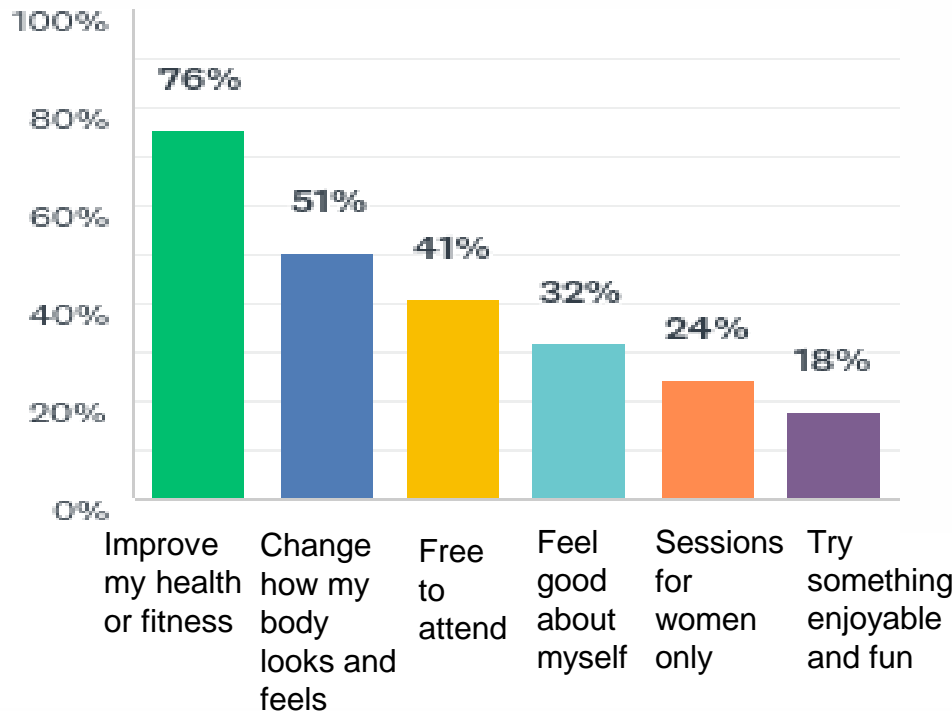
### Motivational barriers

- Lack the trigger to start so why now?
- Engaging in activity alone doesn’t appeal.
- Being self-conscious about body image and weight.

To succeed in getting more women involved in your sport or physical activity, ensure you understand their motivations and barriers to taking part. See our GOGA inspired toolkit for an example template of how to consult with women.

## What motivates inactive women to attend?

Our survey identified the following reasons and motivations of previously inactive women to take that leap and start attending sport and physical activity sessions.



The following reasons were proportionately more important for disabled women in our survey:

- Sessions were free to attend (47%)
- Sessions were for women only (33%)
- Would help manage a health condition or impairment (30%)
- Doing an activity would give me a more positive outlook on life (19%)

\*156 responses. Each respondent chose their top 3 statements.



## What activity offering appeals to women?

GOGA Wrexham addressed many disabled and non-disabled women's barriers by creating and offering sessions with the following elements:

### **A reduced fear of judgement**

- Physical activity in a group can be reassuring and may feel less embarrassing or exposing than exercising alone. These can provide a sense of 'safety in numbers'.
- Groups that are encouraging, motivating and supportive. Women helping to push each other on and where if they see others can do it, they feel they could do it too.
- Feel able to make mistakes or be a bit slow and where instructor helps to 'norm' this.

**"I was absolutely dreading it. For me, putting on a swimming costume in public, it just doesn't happen, but I didn't feel judged in the slightest and that is such a confidence boost."**



“You get a bit of comfort from being with women who are in the same boat as you.”

### **Clearly for beginners and adaptable to ability**

- There is appeal in everyone being at the same beginner level. Where there would be no ‘experts’ and therefore women won’t feel lacking in their own ability.
- Where there is no pressure to do more than you want or able to and no expectation to become ‘really sporty!’
- Sessions are not positioned as a race or a competition against others. Recognising women are there for their own benefit and at most competing against their self.

### **Clear and manageable commitment**

- Sessions offered as an 8-10 week block of activity can be appealing because it feels contained, for a focused period of time and women know what they are committing to.
- Activities that are offered for an initial set period of time create a sense that women have to get on and make the most of it while they can. This can act as a motivator rather than open-ended offers which may mean women never get started.

“I couldn’t commit to gym membership with my work and family life. I’m not sure I’d use it and it would be a waste of money.”



“With an all female cohort, you felt quite supported and more included. We were all different shapes and sizes and abilities but it didn’t seem to make a difference.”

### Women only sessions

- For some women attending GOGA Wrexham sessions, the offer being for women only was an important element of its appeal. Women reported they felt more comfortable, less conscious of what wearing and less judged.
- Some women also felt an all-women environment created a fun environment.

For many women attending GOGA Wrexham, it was felt as an offer where there was no reason not to get started – it’s free, easily accessible and for a set period time.

Gaps between blocks of sessions, especially at Christmas, can be hard to come back from. Momentum is easily lost when a session or two is missed due to illness, childcare or holidays. Women report when this happens it can be hard to come back and feels like starting all over again.

An offer that is once a week can lead to women feeling they are not making progress quickly. Also activities offered for 45 minutes deemed not 'worth' leaving the house for.

## What causes women to stop attending?

Women drop out of sport offered in 'blocks' if the communications are not clear. This can include women thinking sessions have stopped when they haven't or they don't know when they restart.

Scheduling – time or day no longer suiting. If personal schedule changes then sessions on certain days or times are no longer convenient.

It is rarely about the activity itself, women cited busy lifestyles as a reason why attending became a challenge: "I was getting married and life became very busy"... "work got in the way."

## What support do women want to keep them coming back?

Women want support to sustain their new participation habits and organisers not to assume they want to progress to the next level. For some, keeping up their regular attendance is the ambition. Women reported if sessions progressed too fast or women were recommended to 'higher level' activity, the barriers they faced taking up activity reasserted themselves.

### Support Newer Participants

To do this, women recommend:

- Having somebody to help meet, greet and motivate participants. See our role description on the GOGA toolkit.
- Outlining the structure to the sessions, while being reassuring and motivating.
- Providing an informal way to ask any questions.

“...friendly and welcoming staff, when you're going to do something that you haven't done for 30 odd years, and you don't know anyone else...”

“Hearing different people's stories and how people have got on. People of different shapes, sizes, abilities. Seeing it is achievable.”

“If there was someone there who was a buddy, then you'd have more confidence to meet people and to push yourself harder. You'd encourage each other.”



## Encourage Social Interaction

- Create more opportunities for socialising for those who want it. If an activity doesn't easily lend itself to this, consider if there is an opportunity to build it into the session at some point.
- Offer opportunities to talk with others in the session, to stop it being too serious.
- Encourage or arrange additional opportunities to be active or socialise outside of the sessions. For example, participants in the walk to run group would arrange to meet so they had someone to run with in-between sessions.

A number of GOGA Wrexham activities had individual social media groups, which help create a sense of belonging, extend the connection beyond the class, as well as aid the facilitation of additional activities.

## Development and Progression

Only 34% of lapsed participants said they were given advice on how to develop and progress. Women recommended coaches and instructors can support them to stay engaged by:

- Checking if the intensity level is appropriate for them.
- Offering instructions for interim activities between classes. For example, the GOGA Wrexham Couch to 5k instructor provided examples of the running women could do between sessions.
- Providing an opportunity to input into the direction of the session.
- Helping to set and record personal milestones.

A great example from GOGA Wrexham is at the end of the Golf session, each participant was encouraged to reflect on what they had done, what they wanted to work on next time and the instructor spent time giving individual feedback.

### **Showcase the Variety of Opportunity**

- Women recommended promoting other activities available in the area across the week and providing this as a clear timetable. Therefore if personal circumstances change, women can find a way to stay active.

### **Offer Regular Communication**

- Share dates and times of sessions at the beginning, middle and end of each block of sessions. Communicate dates via a newsletter, or similar.
- Women recommend participant-led communications, using social media pages or groups. Coaches and instructors can encourage the set of these. Participant-led communications can be used to provide:
  - Information and updates about sessions
  - A chance to ask questions to others in the group
  - An informal way to check in with anyone that's not attended in a while
  - A sense of belonging, helping to extend connection beyond the sessions.

**Women identified that many of these recommendations can be performed by a volunteer. Women in Sport, in partnership with Volunteering Matters, have created a volunteer role description to support this.**

## Acknowledgments

### Thank you to:

- The research participants
- GOGA Wrexham, Disability Sport Wales and Volunteering Matters
- Percy Research, who supported Women in Sport with the research
- Spirit of 2012, funders of the research and Get Out Get Active

Visit the [GOGA Toolkit](#) on the Women in Sport website for more resources, templates and key findings from the programme.

[www.womeninsport.org](http://www.womeninsport.org)