

uya

united youth alliance



YOUNG WOMEN ACCESSING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT Move Together Blackpool

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a youth-led engagement project commissioned to explore and address the barriers that young women in Blackpool face when accessing physical activity and sport. Delivered in partnership with United Youth Alliance and Blackpool Football Community Trust, alongside local organisations, this initiative was shaped by the voices and lived experiences of young women from across the town.

Special thanks go to the UYA Coastal Social Action Group for their leadership and planning of this project.

Over the course of the project, more than 500 young women engaged through a combination of questionnaires, focus groups, creative sessions, and peer-led discussions. These young women spoke openly about the challenges they face, ranging from practical barriers such as cost and transport to deeply personal struggles around body image, confidence, and gender-based exclusion.

Their insights revealed not only alignment with previously identified concerns but also surfaced new, powerful themes that demand attention—such as the sexualisation of young women in sport settings, the lack of visible women coaches, and the emotional toll of feeling excluded or “not good enough” to participate.

This report brings together both interim and final findings, weaving them into five co-produced, actionable recommendations designed with young women—not just for them. These recommendations aim to make physical activity in Blackpool more inclusive, accessible, and empowering.

Methodology

Our approach to gathering insights was rooted in meaningful youth participation and co-creation:

- Questionnaire distributed via over 25 schools, colleges, and youth organisations.
- Focus groups & podcasts to dive deeper into emerging themes.
- Creative and exploratory sessions where young people shaped the direction of inquiry.
- Youth-led design of engagement questions to ensure relevance and resonance.

Engagement Summary

To date, over 500 young people have been involved:

- 300 completed questionnaires
- 165 joined focus group and podcast sessions
- 52 participated in in-person planning and co-creation sessions



YOUNG WOMEN ACCESSING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

WE HAD OVER 500 YOUNG WOMEN RESPOND THROUGH FOCUS GROUPS OR QUESTIONNAIRES



was
mentioned
806
individual
times

BODY IMAGE ISSUES

- Feeling uncomfortable in the uniforms (skorts are too short)
- Not fitting in the beauty standard
- Feeling sexualised
- Puberty
- Gender dysphoria

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Unisex uniforms
- Better education & support against beauty standards
- More encouragement towards skill & not looks

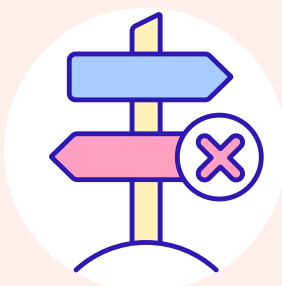


was
mentioned
692
individual
times

CONFIDENCE & MENTAL HEALTH

- Not feeling good enough
- Insecurity
- Fear of failing
- Pressure
- Lack of support & encouragement
- School draining energy

- More mental health support
- Ensuring all players feel appreciated
- Zero tolerance policy on bullying
- Giving more options for everyone to find something they enjoy/are good at



was
mentioned
438
individual
times

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

- A lack of opportunities for women & girls
- Sports team shut down due to a lack of funding
- Lack of members or coaches in women's teams.

- Better opportunities for young women
- Improving funding, specifically for women's themes.



was
mentioned
420
individual
times

LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

- Transport affordability, unreliable & accessibility
- Nervous to take public transport for fear of harassment from men
- Expensive to take part in sports clubs
-

- Providing better opportunities at school & within the community
- Reducing cost for club attendance/increasing funding
- Improve young women's safety



was
mentioned
333
individual
times

GENDERED ISSUES

- Gender stereotypes
- Lack of women coaches and role models
- Male dominated industry
- Specifically girls being bullied out of sport by boys.

- More women coaches
- Showing more women sport role models & combating gender stereotypes
- Teaching young men to be more accepting



Key Findings

Themes that emerged align closely with those identified in the original brief:

Gender bias and lack of equality in sports participation
Insufficient PE provision in schools
Cost barriers affecting accessibility
Low motivation and lack of encouragement
Unrealistic body standards and narrow role models
Confusion around what counts as physical activity
Impact of messaging and promotion—particularly on social media
Transport cost and safety
Lack of visible national and local female role models

Additional Barriers Identified

Two new and significant themes emerged from the youth engagement process:

- Lack of women-only opportunities and poor visibility of available activities
- Invisibility of local role models, with limited social media content celebrating women in sport.

Quantitative Analysis of Themes

Young women's contributions were not only captured anecdotally but also coded and analysed. The frequency of key issues included:

- Body image – mentioned 806 times
- Confidence and mental health – 692 times
- Lack of opportunities – 438 times
- Transport and affordability – 420 times
- Gendered issues (e.g. stereotypes, bullying, exclusion) – 333 times

These findings confirm both the depth and urgency of the challenges faced by young women in Blackpool.

Additional Learning Points

- Reframing physical activity: Many equate it only with formal exercise or gym membership. Everyday movement is undervalued.
- COVID-19 impact: A marked decline in structured activity post-pandemic; references were made to the disappearance of once-popular initiatives (e.g., "What happened to Joe Wicks?").
- Clarity on physical activity: Many asked if things like dance, trampolining, or walking "count" as exercise.

Final Recommendations

From the research, engagement, and co-production process, five key actionable recommendations have emerged:

1. Establish a Youth-Led Social Action/Steering Group

To ensure continuous advocacy, leadership, and accountability. This group should influence strategy, funding decisions, and delivery of programmes.

2. Develop a Co-Produced Communication Strategy

Use youth-friendly platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram) and peer-created content to promote physical activity as accessible, fun, and flexible. Messaging should dismantle the idea of sport being intimidating or “not for me.”

3. Conduct a Local Asset Mapping Exercise

Identify existing, affordable, safe venues and opportunities for physical activity. Work with partners like Move Together Blackpool to highlight these resources through a youth-accessible map or digital guide.

4. Increase Female Visibility in Sport

Invest in training and recruitment of female coaches, promote local women in sport, and challenge stereotypes through campaigns that celebrate real, diverse role models.

5. Create a Shared Resource Bank Co-Curated by Young Women

This should include guides, local activity lists, confidence-boosting content, and support tools that reflect real barriers and lived experiences.

Next Steps

- Further focus group sessions to explore key emerging themes in more depth.
- Ongoing development of co-produced resources and campaigns.
- Engagement with local decision-makers to present this report and co-design the implementation plan.
- Monitor impact and ensure young women remain central to delivery and evaluation.

Conclusion

This project has brought into sharp focus the challenges faced by young women in Blackpool when accessing physical activity. Their insights provide not only data but direction—pointing clearly to what needs to change. The recommendations outlined are grounded in lived experience and co-designed by those most affected.

This is not just a report—it's a call to action to make sport and activity inclusive, welcoming, and empowering for every young woman in Blackpool.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Description	Example Actions	Intended Impact
1.	Youth-Led Steering Group	Ongoing leadership and oversight by young women.	Mystery shopping, school/ youth social campaigns, peer-to-peer evaluation.	Ensures sustained youth voice and co-design in all phases.
2.	Youth-Driven Communication Strategy	Relatable, peer-designed content shared on youth-used platforms.	Social media on body image and confidence, TikTok/ Instagram campaigns.	Builds confidence and dismantles harmful stereotypes.
3.	Local Asset Mapping	Identify accessible, affordable, youth-endorsed places to be active.	Mapping traditional and non-traditional venues, co-created reviews and ratings.	Increases awareness and equitable access.
4.	Increase Female Visibility in Sport	Promote and showcase female leaders and role models in local settings.	Ambassadors, mentorship roles, storytelling, and school/ community engagement.	Tackles exclusion and inspires participation.
5.	Co-Curated Shared Resource Bank	Peer-designed digital/ physical resources for building confidence and guidance around activity.	Youth-led resource library, inclusive and practical tips, everyday movement recognition.	Reduces confusion, builds motivation, and supports inclusive participation.

www.uyacic.org

 @uyacic

Published by United Youth Alliance C.I.C Limited
Registration No: 11618594

uya

united youth alliance